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HOWARD LINCOLN
FORECASTS THE
FUTURE OF U/64!**

DEAD MEAT



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FUSION CONTENTS

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ULTRA 64

The most talked-about gaming system is finally unveiled. Join the *FUSION* staff for the very first look at Nintendo's next-generation platform, including early game screenshots, an interview with Nintendo of America Prez Howard Lincoln, a behind-the-scenes look at the November Shoshinkai Show and up-to-date system specs. Get the latest word on the future of 64-Bit gaming.

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Atari and Sony seek new marketing avenues for '96...M2 changes hands...hot new multimedia products...online gaming...*FUSION* Stock Monitor...*Entertainment News*...*WipeOut*'s seventh board...the kitchen sink...

FUSION NET

Radio days ahead...Internet DJs are streaming real-time audio broadcasts via copper wire, and the world is listening.

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GENERALLY NOMADIC

Sega's new Nomad offers traveling gamers 16-Bit Genesis power in a hand-held. Play your favorite games wherever you damn well please...we did.

TOP FIVE HOTTEST GAME DEVELOPERS

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Remember, it's the thought that counts.

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Arnie Katz throws out all his old 32-Bit consoles in anticipation of the new super systems.

FUSION PRO-FILE

Pick the brain of veteran video gamer Dave Siller for his vision of gaming's past, present, future and what is in his refrigerator.

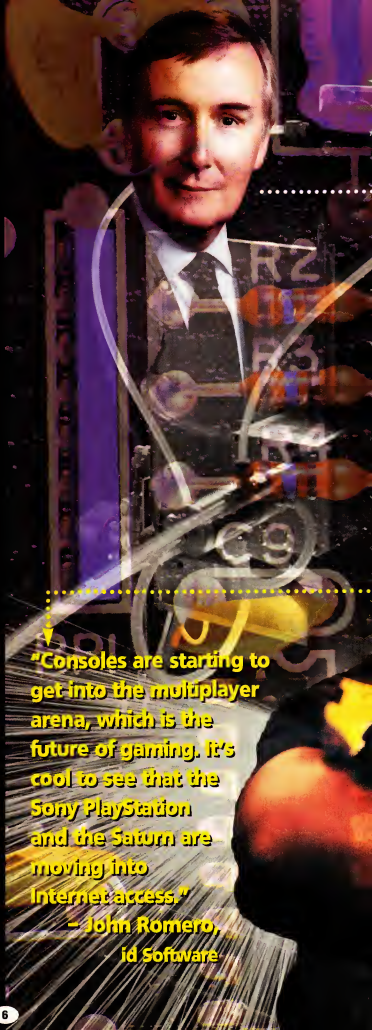
Gaming Prognostication 101

There's an uncountable number of people in the gaming industry attempting to predict the future. Everyone has an opinion, whether they're of sound mind or not. If in cyberspace, one could imagine the entire industry laid out as a huge adumbrating tent, overflowing with a colorful mixture of fortune-teller booths, tarot-reader stands and free-floating psychic friend avatars.

In this issue, we've tried to lay out the facts as they've rolled out from the next-generation companies so far, from an in-depth look at Sony and Sega's new year marketing strategies, to profiles of the biz's hottest developers, to the late-breaking info on the ultra-secretive Ultra 64.

While the PlayStation and Saturn currently rule the gaming market, and while the Ultra is attracting an enormous amount of attention, be prepared for a little hustle and bustle from the M2 chip. Things are only getting started for Matsushita and 3DO in '96, a year that looks to be revolutionary for game companies and game players alike. Over the coming months, we'll keep you up to date on the latest developments of who's who, what and where. Count on *FUSION* to act as your gaming prognosticator for the year ahead and beyond. All this, and you don't even have to call Dionne Warwick.

Be careful out there.
The Management



"Consoles are starting to get into the multiplayer arena, which is the future of gaming. It's cool to see that the Sony PlayStation and the Saturn are moving into Internet access."

**- John Romero,
id Software**

January, 1996

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► "We've got a very powerful processor that's enabling us to in essence compute on the fly."

— Howard Lincoln,
President of Nintendo of America



PlayStation.



You know that dream you've always had of playing professional



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sports? Well, it's not a dream anymore. It's a nightmare.



U R NOT

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If you're not blocking a 100-mile-an-hour slapshot, you're getting trampled by a weak-side blitz. What's going on? You're on the ice with NHL[®] FACE OFF[™] and you're on the field with NFL GAMEDAY[™]. The Sony[®] PlayStation's super-fast 360° graphics bring you face-to-face with a Natrone Means stiff-arm and face-to-astroturf with a Junior Seau blindside sack. On the ice, you'll be trading 3-D hip checks with Ray Bourque and Jeremy Roenick, while trying to keep Mark Messier and Pavel Bure from scoring on you at will. (After all, the players have their real-life abilities.) You can even follow your stats (no matter how pitiful they are) throughout the season. Just like in the pros. Where your nightmare is every defensive lineman's dream come true.

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THE 11TH HOUR

{the five stages.}

1 Shock.

You finally figure out The 7th Guest™, only to hear that its sequel, The 11th Hour is going to be released.

2 Disbelief.

This can't be true! You read the articles, memorize the reviews, & talk incessantly about The 11th Hour. Friends shun you.

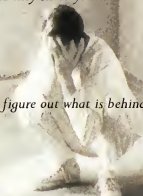
3 Resentment.

They said it would be out, & you believed them. Where is it?! Why would they lie to you?!!

4 Acceptance.

It's out!!! Finally! It's everything they said it would be & more. Now, if you could just figure out what is behind the...

5 Death.



Visit our web site at <http://www.wie.com>

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*The 3-D graphics will whiten
your hair, not your teeth.*



*Relax, and let us draw you
a nice hot bloodbath.*



*"Gee Wally, Mrs. Cleaver
isn't so nice anymore."*



*Nineteen puzzles kill precious
time, as well as brain cells.*

You can stop grieving now. The 11th Hour: The sequel to the

7th Guest™, has finally arrived. This PC CD-ROM game fuses

incredible 3-D graphics and mind-numbing challenges with a

full-length psychological thriller. It's also 12 times bigger and 2

CDs longer than its predecessor. So, is The 11th Hour really

worth the wait? Well, we think it's totally killer.



It's finally arrived.



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Cash Of The Titans

Sony and Sega Marketing Campaigns Contend for the New Year's Platform Title

Toothpaste manufacturers added tartar control and baking soda to their products in an attempt to exceed or match one another in mouth-cleansing capabilities; likewise, the beer industry introduced ice beverages and microbrews while sneaker companies overhyped pump action gear and rear shoe lights. Hardly disappointing gamers, Sony and Sega are similarly raising the gaming industry's stakes with a slew of new marketing campaigns and system add-ons for their respective PlayStation and Saturn platforms. And from the look of things, if anyone is going to be the winner this holiday season, it'll be the consumer.

It's evident that the gaming contest has become a two-horse race (Nintendo aside), with Sony ahead of Sega by a length or two. But don't count the Saturn out of the running, because round two of the 32-Bit war is just heating up. Sega is diversifying, preparing to take an advantage from several fronts. SegaSoft, still in its infant stages, was initiated by Sega in recognition of online gaming's potential, and probably from an acknowledgment of the need for a more

competitive arsenal against the dominating PlayStation and looming Ultra 64. An Internet peripheral is currently in development (as is a keyboard) and is targeted for a \$150 price point. Neil Cohen, Sega's VP of marketing explains the move: "Obviously, providing inexpensive access with functionality might be appealing to consumers. Larry Ellison (Oracle COO) talks about an under-\$500 black box, but if we can make that happen, it will be under \$300 and play games too."

While SegaSoft hopes to

bring online gaming and cheap Internet connectivity to life, Sega PC, yet another company division, is busily porting over existing games like Sega's *Sonic* and *Ecco* titles and the popular *Comix Zone*.

Is Sega spreading itself too thin? Executive VP of Marketing Mike Ribero doesn't think so. "Ubiquity has proven what it can do if you have a brand that can sustain the kind of diversity we're looking for."

Good luck to Sega because they have a rugged newcomer in the PlayStation. Whereas

Sega is employing their "ubiquity" strategy, Sony is unwaveringly focused on their new platform. Chip Herman, Sony's VP of marketing comments, "When Sony designed the hardware system, one of the objectives was to develop a product that could last a long time in the marketplace. We don't anticipate an upgrade or modifications." So don't expect PlayStation PC, PlayStation Online or PlayStation 64 anytime soon.

That doesn't mean that Sony isn't striving for appreciably better and better gaming



PLAYSTATION PROMOTION

• Sony's latest television advertising campaign involves a collage of quickly cut, stylized cyberimages, a la MTV. "Interactive" is the key word from Sony VP of Marketing Chip Herman. You might need to freeze-frame the frenetic commercials, but if you look hard, ye shall find some pretty cool hidden codes and messages. (Ads conceived by TBWA Chiat/Day Inc.)



Ad line:
"The good news is, these games kick serious butt...the bad news is, you're the butt."



Quick cuts and cyber images invoke a VR feel to Sony's ads.



Themes of CD technology and the mysterious "eNOS Lives" run through all Sony ads.



The tag line:
"You are not ready."

in the future; simply, the PlayStation has already proven what it can do. According to a retailer at a Chicago Electronics Boutique, "The PlayStation is way outselling the Saturn." While the EB worker, declined to provide a comparative sales ratio, as did Toys 'R Us, it's clear who's moving hardware.

So how did marketing chieftain Sega lose the edge to upstart Sony in the first place? "There were three reasons," explains Cohen. "First, the [Saturn] was at a very high price point, \$399. Second, there wasn't a lot of software available at the launch that really showed the power of the system. Third, our development systems weren't as easy to use as they could have been.

have to do it differently. Sega and Nintendo have done a great job in reaching this fickle market...We've taken the approach that Sony means quality and leadership, and that's what kids were telling us. All elements of our marketing plan contain information and interactivity. Every television ad, every print ad has codes hidden in that marketing element. There is depth to everything we do." Sony will also be leveraging sister-company influence by placing PlayStation trailers before Columbia/TriStar holiday films and first quarter home-video releases; also by situating PlayStation kiosks in Sony theaters in over 17 states and by updating (on an eight-week basis) a sampler of the

"WE'VE TAKEN THE APPROACH THAT SONY MEANS QUALITY AND LEADERSHIP, AND THAT'S WHAT KIDS WERE TELLING US."

**—CHIP HERMAN
SONY VP OF MARKETING**

So all of those things created a perception that there was some kind of technical troubles with the machine."

Of particular difficulty for programmers like Takara were the dual Hitachi SH2 32-Bit RISC processors. But while the complexity of the processors first caused difficulty for programmers, look for it to be a future advantage. Second-generation games like *Virtua Fighter 2* already look downright impressive.

Sony, on the flip side, can't seem to do any wrong (except for infinitesimal PlayStation difficulties hooking up to old Zenith televisions). Credit that to an intuitive bunch of marketing prognosticators as well as the larger, financially muscular umbrella corporation. Masters in audio and video gadgetry and second only to Coca-Cola in brand-name recognition, Sony has the resources of a third-world nation.

On Sony's cooperative marketing strategy, Herman remarks, "We recognize we

latest platform games.

Sega will have their hands full in challenging the juggernaut Sony Corp. while simultaneously fighting off the SNES. Sega's waging war on two fronts at once and can't forfeit what's still a much larger 16-Bit market. According to Cohen, however, Sega does have one distinctive advantage over the PlayStation, and that's first party proprietary development. "All of our key arcade ports will only play on Sega Saturn. You'll never see them on the PlayStation, like *Sega Rally* and *Virtua Cop*. However, all of the best games that Sony has will eventually play on our system. They only have windows of exclusivity."

Sony's Herman rebuffs Cohen's claims by pointing to two very strong PlayStation titles, *Warhawk* and *Twisted Metal*. As far as games like MK3 and Namco's *Ridge Racer* are concerned, he adds, "Frankly, that may be too little, too late (for the Saturn system)." Time will tell. ●

SEGA SATURN SALES PITCH

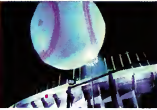
Sega is introducing some punchy and compactly scripted commercials for the coming months. Their new campaign is often dark and *noir* in style, overlaying moody music with shadowy backdrops. The target audience for the new Saturn ads (not all of them) appeal to an older demographic, but still retain the "cool" quality of past campaigns. (Ads conceived by Goodby, Silverstein & Partners)



The 15-second spot entitled "Car Alarm" begins with a shot of a parked vehicle, and the sounding off of its car alarm.



A close-up of the windshield reveals a break-in.



A crack of a bat and a soaring stadium home run reveal the true nature of the break-in.



The tag line:
"A little too real."

DIE HARD M2: 3DO Gets a Second Wind

A mega-deal has turned the M2 from potential vaporware into the Ultra 64's most potent competitor. The 64-Bit technology is now on the fast track for second-half 1996 delivery.

Despite rumored deals with Sega and Philips, 3DO struck a \$100-million accord with Matsushita Electric Industries Co., sending the erstwhile hardware competitor into the 64-Bit battle with a fat wallet for a shield and an aggressive worldwide licensee as an ally. Matsushita now owns



The images shown here provide an example of M2 programming capabilities.



exclusive rights to the M2 hardware and its operating system—the agreement stipulates a \$3-a-disc royalty for 3DO that could pour an additional \$150 million into the 3DO treasury over the next five years.

Many analysts who liked the original platform had long questioned 3DO's financial ability. The hard facts indicate that it takes at least \$100 million to introduce a new console to the international market. Prior to this, the Redwood City, Calif., company had precariously

Ayako Shotoko of Matsushita's Electric Industrial Co. Ltd., Interactive Media Division, sheds a little light on M2's shady future.

"Having had a discussion with our development team, as they are still in the process of finalizing the design, there is a high possibility that the design will change from the one shown at E3."

—Expect a much sleeker, more compact design for the new M2 hardware system, with a possible choice in console colors.

"We are in the process of negotiating to sublicense hardware manufacturing to the third-party hardware manufacturers. We have not reached any agreement yet."

—3DO is in development for at least 10 games for the M2 platform. Other third-party publishers are rumored to have begun development as well.

"We are currently studying the pricing that will be acceptable to the market, but we have not reached any conclusion yet. I think it is too early to comment even about the price range, having not seen that product yet. And we are not confirmed what the material costs will be."

—The future M2 platform was originally priced by 3DO, in mid-'94, between \$399-699. Matsushita has not confirmed new price points, but has promised an upgrade for the M2 system (nicknamed the "bulldog") that will play 3DO games.

dwindled to a cash reserve of less than \$20 million.

"In order to succeed in this business, we needed to acquire the rights and become the licensor," explains Mikio Higashi, Matsushita's managing director. "We will implement this technology in a wide variety of applications in both



M2 AT A GLANCE

Highlights

- 10 custom coprocessors
- 528 MBytes/Second Bus Bandwidth
- 1 million polygons per second
- 1000 million pixels/second rendering speed

CPU

- Power PC 602
- 66 MHz RISC
- 132 Million Floating Point Operations per second

Memory

- 48 Mbits (SDRAM, ROM)
- 64-Bit bus
- Cache Coherent Memory System

Graphics

- Resolution: 640x480 & 320x240 or 16-Bit color depth
- Full-Motion Video

Audio

- 66 MHz DSP
- 32 channels: hardware decomposition and interpolation on all channels.
- 3-D CD-quality sound

consumer and commercial audio, video and computer businesses."

The first two products, to be sold in the U.S. under the Panasonic brand name, are an accelerator add-on to upgrade the 32-Bit REAL multiplayer and a full M2 console. No price points have been set, but \$150 is the price most often estimated for the accelerator. Also expect an M2 set-topper, a modular coin-op machine and integration with home computers to follow.

Matsushita will join 3DO in whooping the M2 consumer mating call to the rest of the world in an attempt to match the success Sony had with the release of the PlayStation. Matsushita will sublicense hardware and software rights, although no developers have signed at press time. Good luck to all involved. ●

FRIENDS DON'T LET FRIENDS FLY SOLO

And with Werewolf® vs. Comanche 2.0™ you don't have to. That's because with two killer CD games in one box and advanced multiplayer capabilities (via modem, network or direct connect), you can go head-to-head, team up for cooperative play or fly solo.



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Available on PC-CD-ROM

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Go To Mars

Fans of the PlayStation game *WipeOut* will be pleased to know that there's a secret code



hidden in Sony commercials (above) that enables gamers to reach a seventh hidden track. Aptly named *Flrestar*, the course sends drivers across the red drifts of Mars. To access *Flrestar*, choose single player at the Option Screen, and press and hold down the following buttons at once: L1, L2, right directional arrow, start, S, O, X. The X must be pressed last.

Notes From COMDEX

• Forte's Vfx1 Headgear Virtual Reality System will retail for \$995 and provide a 3-D stereoscopic flip-up visor with adjustable binary optics, dual .7"-color LCDs, stereo headphones, cyberpuck controller and microphone.

• ViewSonic multimedia monitors were the pick of the show with sparkling color and high quality sound. The 15" monitor retails for approximately \$600.

• A version of Top Gun technology, used by 7th Level in *Battle Beast*, will be sold to other developers next year for around \$500.

• IBM announced plans for an interpersonal computer that

will ship some time next year. The machines have no floppy drive and are designed specifically for networking.

• Time Warner's T-Mek *Tournament of Destruction National Collegiate Tour* will visit 128 colleges throughout January. Find out more at <http://user.aol.com/TMEK1>.

• Probably the most embarrassing moment of COMDEX this year: Blistex gave Bill Gates the *Most Micro-Soft Lips Award* in their *World's Most Beautiful Lips* promotion.

CONFUSION

Comdex/PacRim Jan. 16-18, 1996, Vancouver Trade & Convention Centre, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada; contact the Interface Group at (617)449-6600. Trade Only.

UniForum Feb. 14-16, 1996, Moscone Center, San Francisco, CA; contact the Interface Group at (617)449-6600. Trade Only.

New Media Expo Feb. 27-29, 1996, Los Angeles Convention Center, Los Angeles, CA; contact the Interface Group at (617)449-6600. Trade Only.

Comdex/ComExpo-Mexico Feb. 27-March 1, 1996, The Sports Palace, Mexico City, Mexico; contact the Interface Group at (617)449-6600. Trade Only.

Windows World/Mexico Feb. 27-March 1, 1996, The Sports Palace, Mexico City, Mexico; contact the Interface Group at (617)449-6600. Trade Only.

Enterprise Computing Solutions April 10-12, 1996, Georgia World Congress Center, Atlanta, GA; contact the Interface Group at (617)449-6600. Trade Only.

For more information regarding convention dates, contact: <http://www.eia.org/ceg> and <http://www.comdex.com>

BY THE NUMBERS

For second quarter 1995, worldwide CD software sales reached \$292 million. While gaming products outsold business software in total units, business software reaped in more total revenue.

"What is a billion?" asks Nintendo of America. The answer: the annual interest on Bill Gates' Microsoft stock; 200 times man's tenure on Earth; and most importantly, the number of cartridges sold by Nintendo to date. In the past 12 years, the gaming giant has sold video games around the globe at a rate of nearly three per second. End to end, that means plastic cartridges circumscribing the world three times over.

A Jupiter and Yahoo! survey reports that the majority of current Web users have been connected for less than a year. It also maintains that in the past six months, nearly 30 percent of respondents have actually made a purchase online, 66 percent of which were made through the Web. The survey depicts the average Internet consumer as a single, 25-34-year-old American male with an income between \$35,000-49,999.

According to the latest RLB Inc. poll, the number of jellybeans in your local Osco's "Win All the Beans" jellybean contest is 1,986.

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Virtua Fighter™

To you they're games.
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Interact's **GAME SHARK™** for the Sega
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is the ultimate game enhancer! **GAME
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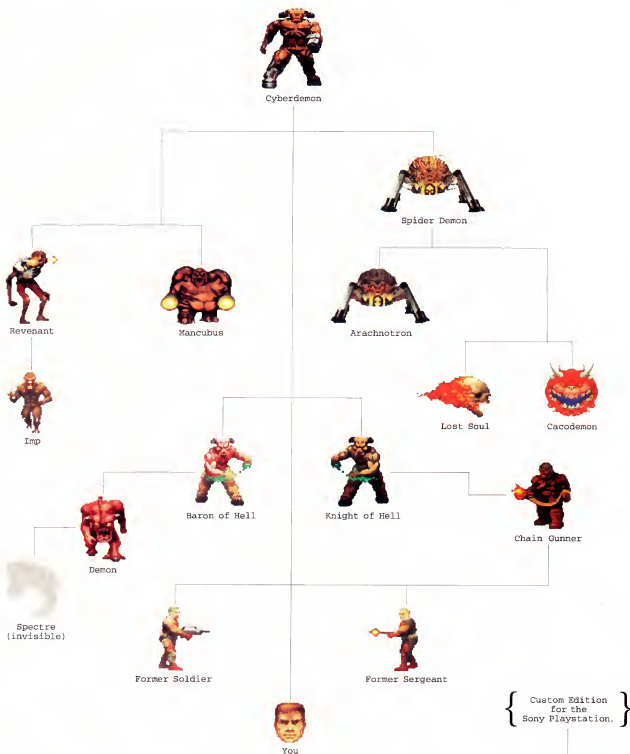
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{ An introduction to the hierarchy of Doom. }



Doom. **The Sony Playstation Custom Edition.** Over 50 levels of madness and mayhem from Doom I and II. Plus all new levels of destruction as well. Every weapon, monster, and surprise you loved before. Plus a two-player Deathmatch mode for when you're feeling really nasty. The nice thing about Doom is you always know where you stand. Even if it's at the bottom of the food chain.



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PSINet Gets Civilized

Who's got their hand in the online cookie jar these days? Well, just about everyone, but the most notable announcements have come from the Internet providers over at PSINet who have recently signed agreements with both Microprose and Mpath Interactive to bring gaming online.

"We are the sole provider that Microprose sought out because our backbone actually makes this thing work as well as it does," boasts Brain Muys of PSINet about the newly planned *Civilization* online game. Actually, Microprose has been actively seeking out other Internet providers—but yes, PSINet's *InterRamp* service is a great platform for the game, especially considering their 160 worldwide POPs (points of presence). A special CivNet Web site, www.microprose.com/civnet, will allow up to seven international

users to locate other opponents, and compete and chat in real time.

Mpath declined to comment on any of their content, but a PSINet spokesperson spilled, "Mpath's game has only been screened to date for a

select group of analysts. They've suggested it's going to be called *Terminal Velocity*. It will essentially be a jet fighter, *Star Wars*-type, very lifelike simulation along the lines of what F-18 fighter pilots use when they're training."

Mpath did announce, however, a complemen-

tary platform that will enhance PSINet's network performance for latency critical applications. Look for Mpath software in early '96. CivNet software, on the other hand, will arrive in stores early winter and will be bundled with *InterRamp* software and a free seven-day trial service. Mmm, bundling goodness. ☉



Microprose's *Civilization* will be made available through PSINet.

ONLINE SIDELINE

It's sort of a Disneyland for onliners, but without the cloying sing-song of *It's A Small World* endlessly ringing between your ears. The *ImagNation* Network (INN), if you haven't already visited it, is broken into five domains—of particular interest



this month, The Arena, where users can play the only multi-player football game online.

Armchair quarterbacks should download free *Front Page Sports: Football Online* software at www.inngames.com.

Also check out Playmates Interactive Entertainment's Web site at www.playmates.com, to find out the latest information on *Earthworm Jim 2*, and other upcoming gaming titles. Additionally, Hasbro Interactive has released a site for their new online version of *Monopoly* at www.monopoly.com. ☉

NEWLY-WEB

Word of Mouth

Je ne parle pas Français? Not a problem. Accent Software's home page, www.accentsoft.com, now offers Net-goers a free utility that allows Web browsing in over 30 languages. Similar to other Web browsers, Accent's software supports graphics and hypertext links, and pops up automatically when a user downloads multilingual text. *Fantastiquel*



Tune Up

It turns out that buying that '72 Dodge Pacer was a bad idea after all. Before you hit the used-car lots, be sure to check out the Automotive Information Center's consumer resource site at www.autosite.com. A showroom of over 24,000 pages provide car buyers with book values, published reviews and repair guides. There's a lot of free info at AutoSite, but a \$4.95, three-month passport fee provides users with unlimited access.

Night Life

Memories of awful films like *Electric Dreams* and *Weird Science* might be invoked when you enter the carnal realm of *Virtual Dreams* (www.virtualdreams.com). The real-time adult entertainment service, targeted to heterosexual male voyeurs, combines sensual fantasies with a computer interface. For up to \$5 a minute, users can receive live video transmissions via standard phone wires. Is it worth it? That's a matter of taste.



Southern Exposure

Excuse the banal pun, but Mountain Travel-Sobek's *Virtual Antarctica* is one of the coolest new sites on the Web. Join a real explorative voyage to the Deep South with live chat sessions, digital photos, weather updates and travel itineraries. Glaciers of information on wildlife, crystalline ice caves and historical explorations complement an entertaining interface. Hypertext to www.terraquest.com for loads of ice, ice baby.

Mental Block?

If old puzzle games leave you feeling flat,

Try a new dimension in puzzling excitement



A 3-Dimensional Challenge!



Treat your
brain to a whole new
sensation. Take on a friend
or a clever CPU opponent and move
shapes in a real 3-Dimensional environment!



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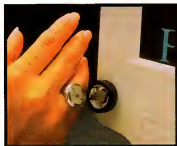
Whole-in-one

Conceptually, it's here—RCA's Genius Theater is one of the first all-purpose multimedia technologies, and incorporates a 35-inch direct-view color TV, CD-ROM changer, wireless keyboard (for accessing a number of online services) and a point-and-click remote control. The Genius Theater is not for sale yet, but when it is, going online will be as easy as turning on your television.



Multimedia Jukebox

NEC Technologies, Inc. has developed the first internal, quad-speed, four-disc changer, a step up from Gateway's current three-disc shuffler. For \$279, multimedia users can (at the touch of a button) swap *Grammar Rock* for *Space Sirens II* for *Compton's Encyclopedia* for *PC Golf*—and the changer operates as either a single- or four-drive letter device.



PRODUCT Watch

Wonder Twin Powers Activated

Using an ATM-like technology, Dallas Semiconductor is introducing their computer "deadbolt," or the *Priva-C* (\$79). The device secures any home computer from undesirable users through patented software and two electronic chips, one that attaches to a keychain or ring and another that plugs into the parallel port of a PC. Touch the two access buttons together, type in your PIN number, and *voilà*, you have access to your computer.

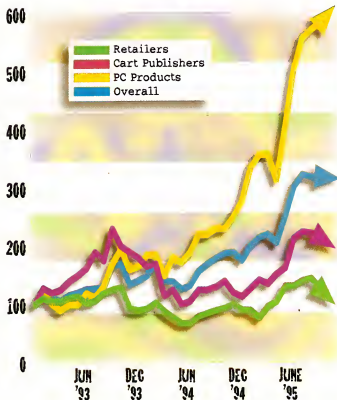
FUSION STOCK MONITOR

The *FUSION* index of interactive electronic stocks flattened out in October after rising consistently since April. During the month, several stocks were highly volatile, reflecting the battle between enthusiastic growth investors and critics of high multiple stocks (especially the PC-oriented companies with market capitalization to revenue multiples in excess of 6X). By segment, PC-oriented companies rallied 2.3 percent, offset by declines in retail (-11 percent) and cartridge publishers (-4 percent). Eleven stocks lost ground during October, versus four that gained.

On the plus side, the shares of America Online jumped 16 percent (due to strong investor demand for online service companies), followed by a 5.5 percent increase in Activision (favorable earnings surprise) and a 2 percent rise in Davidson. T*HQ spiked 25 percent on profitable September quarter results.

The retail segment stocks were down, reflecting concerns about a slowing economy, high consumer debt and weak anticipated holiday sales. Shares of Egghead sank 15 percent (exacerbated by poor corporate division earnings), CompUSA dipped 11 percent and NeoStar slid 13 percent.

Many other stocks gave up ground. Spectrum Holobyte dropped 19 percent (related to arbitrage after completing a \$50 million convertible bond offering), Broderbund dipped 9 percent on concern that SoftKey would break up the merger with The Learning Company, and 3DO slumped 9 percent after announcing it had sold off rights to M2 to Matsushita for \$100 million. Creative Labs fell 15 percent and Sierra eroded 5 percent, reflecting dynamic intramonth price swings. Electronic Arts closed down slightly, Acclaim lost 8 percent and WMS gave up 7 percent. ●



TARGET OR BE TARGETED!

The battle rages on. Two opponents. Two strategies. The year is 1941 and the scene is the Pacific. Japanese Zeros appear on the horizon, marking the beginning of World War II. From Pearl Harbor to unconditional surrender, this is your battlefield.

PTO II delivers the power to control this infamous war. With new technology, faster and better war machines are at your disposal. Command the guns of the mighty Missouri, launch devastating Japanese fighter attacks, or storm the beaches of Okinawa. India, Australia, and the east coast of the United States mark new regions for enemy domination. Three campaigns await the most ambitious of generals while single-ship engagements prepare you for more!

- Play one of three major campaigns or seven short scenarios
- Set your own victory conditions
- Execute precise military maneuvers with over 100 unique officers
 - Select from 120 warships, 60 fighters & bombers, 20 submarines, & 10 categories of tanks
 - Intercept & decipher enemy messages using technologically advanced weaponry
- Command forces from 70 strategic bases around the globe
- Full motion video enhances special events and commands (not available for Super NES or IBM CD)
- One or two player excitement

SUPER NES SCREEN SHOTS



TORPEDOES ARE A DEADLY FORM OF ATTACK.



STRONGARM PRESIDENTS, PRIME MINISTERS AND COMMANDERS.



POWERFUL GUNS PROVIDE LONG-RANGE FIRE POWER.



P.T.O. II

Pacific Theater of Operations

Coming Soon for:



SUPER NINTENDO



MICROSOFT
WINDOWS
COMPOSITE
IBM CD ROM

SEGA SATURN

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Available at your favorite retailers nationwide.
Phone 415/348-0500 for additional information
or to order direct.

Bits, Bytes and Buzz...

Oracle continues to promote their \$500 network computer and expect a working model sometime in '96...**Virtual I-o**, the maker of VR headsets, announced \$19 million in financing to develop lower-end and more affordable hardware, in part for the **Sony** PlayStation...**AOL** and **Intuit** have joined forces to provide online electronic banking...**Byron Preiss Multimedia** has released their Virtual Toy Store, offering users 3-D downloadable

playthings at www.byron-preiss.com...**AT&T** is offering free Internet access and voice messaging to 110,000 public and private schools. It will be a costly investment for AT&T, but they're banking on a future pool of service buyers.

...**Multimedia Magic** is allowing anyone to set up a 3-D virtual apartment in The Colony, the residential district of Cybertown. Also expect flyable spaceships and drivable freeways real soon. ☐

CONVENTION WARS II:

The International Digital Software Association initiated a little head-to-head competition against the Summer Consumer Electronics Show last year, and virtually stole away the electronic entertainment industry to their own E³ show in Las Vegas. Well, a whole new pack of industry convention hounds are battling it out again. This time around, it's the International Data Group (IDG) partnering with the

Interactive Multimedia Association that's causing a stir. The two groups will stage the IMA Expo in New York City, Sept. 17-19, 1996, a show that will focus on CD-ROMs, online, broadband, enterprise networks and Internet delivery systems.

IDG
VS.
COMDEX

The worst casualty of the latest convention war will probably be Comdex Las Vegas. The sheer size of their November Comdex show drew grumbles from attendees and many former patrons

indicated that they would be happy to support another more industry-specific show.

Michael Braun, chairman of the IMA, told *FUSION*, "Our members want to dedicate their resources to just one major multimedia development show a year, and right now no show comes close to what we envision for the IMA Expo."

IMA is asking several affiliated trade associations to hold their annual conferences at their new convention, and so far, CD-ROM/DV Expo has agreed. Powerful companies that have also signed up for the show include Apple, Horizons, IBM, Intel, Kaleida and Macromedia. With strong backing like that, prepare for more convention fireworks to come. ☐

GAMING TOP TEN

TOASTING THE NEW YEAR

In its debut, *Ultimate Mortal Kombat 3* sprung to the top of the charts, knocking previous king of the hill, *Tekken 2*, to the number two position.



LAST MONTH VIDEO ARCADE GAMES

- 1 - *Ultimate MK 3* Midway
- 2 1 *Tekken 2* Namco
- 3 - *Open Ice* Midway
- 4 2 *Mortal Kombat 3* Midway
- 5 3 *Viper* Fabtek
- 6 9 *Gal's Panic 2* Kameko
- 7 18 *Great 1000 Mile Rally* Kameko
- 8 4 *Raiden DX* Fabtek
- 9 5 *X-Men: Children of Atom* Capcom
- 10 8 *WWF Wrestlemania* Williams

Estimated costs of up to \$7 million and a developmental timetable somewhere between two to three years may or may not pay off for *Phantasmagoria*. This month, however, Sierra enjoys top sales.



LAST MONTH PC GAMES

- 1 4 *Phantasmagoria* Sierra On-Line
- 2 2 *Microsoft Flight Simulator* Microsoft
- 3 6 *Ultimate Doom: Thy Flesh Consumed* GT Interactive
- 4 3 *Myst* Broderbund
- 5 1 *Mechwarrior II* Activision
- 6 5 *NASCAR Racing* Papyrus
- 7 - *Command & Conquer* Virgin
- 8 9 *Doom II* GT Interactive
- 9 7 *Dark Forces* LucasArts
- 10 - *Apache Gunship* Interactive Magic

Myst continues to enjoy top Mac sales, but there's really no substitute for blowing away the minions of hell. Expect top honors to swell for *Doom II* in the weeks to come.



LAST MONTH MACINTOSH GAMES

- 1 2 *Doom II* GT Interactive
- 2 4 *Myst* Broderbund
- 3 3 *Dark Forces* LucasArts
- 4 1 *Dungeon Master II* Interplay
- 5 6 *Star Wars Rebel Assault* LucasArts
- 6 9 *SimCity 2000* Maxis
- 7 5 *Top Ten Pack* Electronic Arts
- 8 10 *SimCity 2000 Collection* Maxis
- 9 - *Caesar's Palace* Virgin
- 10 - *Star Trek Next Generation: Omnipedia* Simon & Schuster

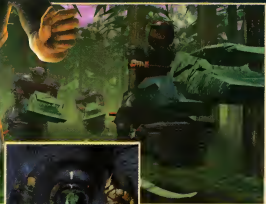
Video Arcade Game listing courtesy of RePlay Magazine.

HOW TO MAKE FRIENDS AND ANNIHILATE ENEMIES.



Infiltrate the enemy
Comm Bunker.

You've crashed on a strange planet. You quickly become friends with the local alien, Gaan. Together, you'll go from hauling butt through the forest to blasting into a bomb-filled mine shaft to fighting through an armory to destroy a reactor. It's Alien Odyssey — the PC CD-ROM game with incredibly smooth character animation and Argonaut's exclusive 3D adventure game technology. It's total annihilation. But in a friendly sort of way.



Use teamwork to solve
puzzles and outwit invaders.



**ALIEN
ODYSSEY**
PHILIPS



COORDINATES: WEBMASTER@WWW.TRANSFUSION.COM

External Correspondence

FMV DISAPPOINTMENT

Dear *FUSION*,

Concerning your article on the making of *Ripper* the interactive movie by Take Two Interactive, check out those cheesy special affects done on the fat guy's belly! The technicians could have done a much better job of creating a convincing exploding belly. It looked like the guy had a Hoppity Hop glued to his gut or something. What was the budget for that thing anyway, something like \$4 million? It just goes to show you that the interactive game genre has a long way to go. Even with big names like Walken it still lacks the excitement level that a good, old-fashion digital game can bring. I would pick *Doom* or even *Pac-Man* over any FMV PC game. What is the appeal of the FMV game? Looking at the extensive line of Digital Pictures products I see nothing that interests me. The amount of movements available to the player are

just too limited. A digital game offers far better speed and character manipulation. FMV is still in its infancy and the amount of coverage *FUSION* gives the genre should be limited to the new FMVs that are truly groundbreaking and not just another dumping ground for used-up actors.

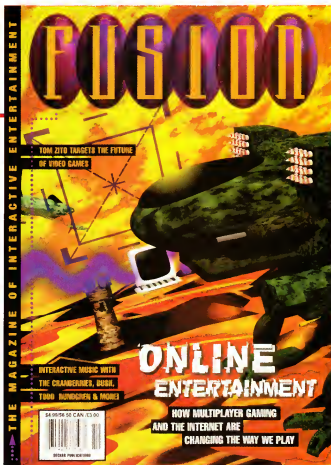
Jerry Erhal
Albany, NY

You're right, FMV is still in its early stages but we feel the amount of coverage we give the genre is about right. The gaming public is buying these games, so we must review them for quality. Oh, and by the way, the exploding belly wasn't that bad.

GOOD EFFORT

FUSION,

I have read every issue of *FUSION* and have been, for the most part, pleased with what I see and read. The direction *FUSION* struck out on was a bold one for a magazine rooted primarily in gaming. The whole cyber-culture, pop-culture thing is big now what with mags like *Access* and *Wired* out there, but the gaming mag circle has remained pretty dry;



that is until *FUSION* hit. I really like the wit and humor interspersed throughout the magazine, not to mention the visuals. I loved the list of things the PlayStation cannot do. I also loved the William Shatner wig-treatment thing in the November issue. That was brilliant!

Keep up the good work and don't lose your sense of humor.

Wendy Hansen
Madison, WI

Thanks for all the praise Wendy, your check's in the mail! You think we're funny now, wait until we come out of our protective chrysalis.



DEHYDRATION

Dear *FUSION*,

I applaud your willingness to use Bill Gates in your mag for something other than the usual "Bill is God" routine I see everywhere else. I really dug the cybersickness schtick in the November News section. Right on. It's important to shed some humor on those who don't normally receive it. Come on, no one's untouchable these days, even the King of DOS himself. I hope Bill Gates sees the piece and can have a laugh over it. If he doesn't, then he's just a big grump.

Clarence Hendricks
Lansing, MI

Bill who?



CRACK THE CODE

Dear *FUSION*,

I am not sure if it has occurred to you guys that many of your readers are probably hardcore game addicts and would appreciate some secret game codes. I have gotten codes from other gaming mags and see no reason why *FUSION* could not provide some tasty codes to some of the more popular games out there. Also, more game reviews in general would be nice. With all the different systems available, I may only find three to four reviews for games that I can use on my system. Perhaps you could divide up the games by system and review several for each.

Andrew Stack
Hinkley, IL

Well Andrew, we'll do our best to include some codes in the mag. Check out this month's News section for a great WipeOut code. Remember, watch those Sony PlayStation commercials very closely...you may just find some more great codes.



People say the moment of death is calm and serene...

FUSION LETTERS

ULTRA CRAZY

Dear FUSION,

With the release of the Ultra 64 on the horizon, I have to question Nintendo's logic in creating the system. In the first place, why do they think the gaming public is going to accept cartridges after getting a taste of the pleasures of the CD? Sure it takes a little longer to get the game up and running, but the wait is worth it once it has started. Second, the price of a cartridge is way too high! I can't see the gaming public shelling out that kind of money for one game. What if the game really sucks? I would be plenty mad if I spent \$65 on a game and it was a complete dibble. Nintendo might want to



research the product a little more before they turn it loose on the gaming public. Even if the games look awesome it's going to be hard for kids to come up with the money to buy new games.

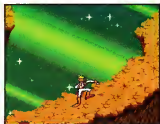
Bill Shmalls
Columbus, OH

The youth of today have a huge disposable income. If the games are good, the kids will find a way to buy them.

BEND OVER

FUSION,

Can you please tell me why big game companies feel they need to constantly upgrade systems for us, the unlucky consumer? I am getting tired of always having to second guess my judgement in buying games for my 16-Bit system! I don't care about the PlayStation or the Sega Saturn. I am perfectly satisfied with my Super NES and see no reason to "upgrade" to one of the overpriced, unproven systems. I'm pissed that this might be the end of the cartridge when I am still interested in building up my game library. Hell, I still enjoy playing *Space Ace* as I'm sure others do too! Why do I have to bend over for the big money-grubbing game companies?



Mike Eiler
Boston, MA

Mike, Just as the 8-track fell to the cassette and the record fell to the CD, some things just have to evolve to take full advantage of their technology. There is no reason why you should stop playing your 16-Bit games if you still enjoy them, including Space Ace.

Veiled in shadowy darkness, they await your return. Mechanical monstrosities. Shrieking invaders. You thought you had destroyed them. You thought the nightmare was over. You thought wrong.

Prepare yourself for the all new Descent II. Warped to a distant part of the galaxy, you'll battle all new enemies and all new terrors in a mind-twisting 360° 3-D environment that will challenge you like nothing before. Travel through cascading waterfalls, sink into deadly molten lava, and plunge into total darkness as you descend into the very heart of the enemy. At your command is a deadly



OBVIOUSLY THEY NEVER PLAYED



DESCENT™ II INTERACTIVE DEMO

arsenal of 10 new, configurable weapons and an all new Weapons Transfer system that allows you to assist buddies during multiplayer assaults. You'll also find a helpful robotic ally, all new power-ups, a rocking new soundtrack, explosive sound effects AND a high-powered headlight beam to assist you when things seem their darkest.

Descend upon the Interplay web page at <http://www.interplay.com> or check with your local computer software retailer for the latest release of the Descent II Interactive demo. Available for IBM and compatible.

Watch for the full 30-level version coming this March.

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DEVELOPED BY
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Software**



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Irvine, CA 92714
(714) 533-6678
<http://www.interplay.com>

CLEVER INSTINCT

Dear FUSION,

While playing *Killer Instinct* for SNES I discovered a code that speeds up the game three times. To do this code you must hold A,B,Y,X,L and R while pressing the directional pad back and fourth in One-player Mode. If you do this code correctly, you will hear a punch sound after you pick your player and [the screen] is showing the battle contestants.

Jeff Drobik
Fullerton, CA

KOMBAT COP-OUT

FUSION,

I'd like to applaud Pat Sandberg's opinions on *Mortal Kombat* in his review of *WipeOut* (November '95 issue). *MK* is a rancid piece of dogshit! I like games that immerse me in a different world, not ones that require me to master a thousand different joystick/button combinations. Christ! Some geeks invent a game where you can rip someone's head off and every frenetic 16-year-old goes nuts! Now, thanks to Midway, the gaming industry regurgitates the same, boring fighting scenarios every year. Get a clue, folks! Sounds like *WipeOut* has gone and done something original...for a change.

Eric Hart
Champaign, IL

Next time you write us, Eric, don't hold back so much.

PEZ APPEAL

Gentlemen,

I noted with interest your recent feature on the Web site devoted to PEZ candy. You might be interested to know that in the late '70s, the Shriners introduced a promotional candy based on PEZ. Derived from the Shriners' colorful and fashionable headgear, this candy treat was called FEZ.

However, due to copyright-infringement issues and a strange scent that seemed to emanate from the beige-colored candy pellets, the trial run was cut short, and was never resumed. However, maybe this was for the best, considering that consumer surveys revealed that wee tots—a desirable demographic for any purveyor of candy—found the prospect of extracting treats from the "neck" of an elderly man

made of plastic unappealing, to say the least. Those crazy Shriners should do their market research next time!

Jerry Cosloy
New York, NY

Crazy yes, but nobody—and I mean nobody—looks as good driving a 1/5-scale Corvette.



FUSION LETTERS

DIRTY BIRD

FUSION,

It's a sad thing when we as game players have to put up with the most obnoxious commercials and magazine advertisement in the world. I'm talking about the plethora of idiotic game commercials on the air today. There are those inane Sega ads where the big dumb guy hits himself on the head with a flattened

road-kill squirrel in order to see colors on his Game Boy. Then to add insult to injury, we have the word "SEGA"

screamed in our face at the end of the commercial.

"You do the math." Who can forget that stroke of marketing genius. Not as simple or stupid as just yelling "Sega" but hey, they're trying. Now it seems we are bombarded with quick-cut game commercials almost constantly! Don't blink your eyes or you may miss the whole damn thing. Yes, I like games and I do have an attention span longer than a second, thank you. Who are these commercials aimed at anyway, Beavis and Butt-head? Come on ad guys, give us a break—we do have brains you know!

The ads in magazines are just as insulting as their TV brethren. If they are not

featuring a guy with his finger up his nose they are focusing on three fat guys' buttocks.

As an adult gamer I object to game ads that treat us as lower echelon, brain dead idiots! I'd rather have them cleaned up or taken off the air and the magazines altogether!!!

Pete Marswick
South Bend, IN



Pete, what more can we add to that insight except advertisers seem to be caught in a "Shock" rut when it comes to

catching the attention of the MTV Generation.

ONLINE GAMING

FUSION,

I have to agree that online gaming is the shape of things to come, as stated in your December feature on the subject. In a way it could end up being an indecisive person's nightmare, so many games so little time! I guess the key to the whole thing would be the cost of such a service and also the reliability of it.

Please bring us more info on the different services as it becomes available.

Mike Justice
San Diego, CA

Mike, we'll bring you all the info we can on the subject.

FUSION

Thanks, everyone, for writing. We welcome your letters, e-mail and other unmentionables—the more the merrier! Send your snail mail to:

Fall Out c/o FUSION
1920 Highland Avenue Suite 222
Lombard, IL 60148
Webmaster@WWW.Transfusion.COM

REACH OUT:

The Best in
Web Sitings

http this:

◆ **Riddle du Jour**
<http://www.new3.com/riddle/>
Match wits with the inscrutable Online Sphinx. Daily brain-teasers and prizes, and the thrill of being lionized in the Hall of Fame.



◆ **Two Minute Warning**
<http://www.dtd.com/tmw/>
Gain virtual yards in plgskin trivia. Compete against other Web sports fans for nifty autographed sports paraphernalia.

◆ **Win Ten Million Dollars Now!!**
<http://www.student-services.com/cs>
There's little confusion about the stakes: millions! All you have to do, see, is fill out this form, and get some info on low-cost magazines.



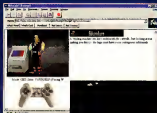
◆ **Riddler**
<http://www.riddler.com>
A collection of elaborate online puzzles. Race through the Web to find your way through a course of hints and hyperlinks, look for clues in a scavenger hunt or just answer some trivia questions.

◆ **Honorable Mentions:** Alien Software Creativity Contest <http://www.aliensoft.com/creative.html>
Cyberspace Challenge <http://cyberchallenge.paranet.com/>
◆ Prizes Domain <http://www.prizes.com/>

Joystick Joyride

For those who don't yet own a PlayStation, Sony has constructed an intriguing interactive game at www.scea.sony.com/SCEA/dungeon that takes the Net-goer through a Virtual Development Facility (SVIDEF). Probably one of the more immersive sites on the Web, this interactive world works much like a simple adventure game and operates with the three commands: "Use," "Look" and "Get." An ever-present PlayStation joystick acts as the navigation tool to move through the virtual hallways—one need only point and click on the joystick's directional arrows to walk from room to room.

Solving small riddles, like the deciphering of access panel codes, allows the gamer to ride up a virtual elevator to higher levels



where assorted clues, objects and PlayStation game characters await discovery. For example, in the Lounge on Level 1, players can speak with Mortal Kombat 3's Sonya Blade and Kano. Amusingly, if you annoy him enough, the mean-hearted Kano challenges you to a "death match!"

While the Virtual Development Facility experience isn't anything spectacular from a gaming standpoint, it runs with more depth than almost any site currently up on the Web. And expect much more from Sony in the near future, particularly from their planned joint Internet venture with Visa to bring a multi-program entertainment service, the Sony Station, online. ■

WEBSITE OF THE MONTH

IT'S YOUR FIRST DAY ON THE JOB. GET A CLUE.



The body was found bound and gagged. Even your grandmother could tell this was no accident. Welcome to the gripping, ultra-realistic world of SFPD HOMICIDE™ where you're the chief investigator in an actual case from the files of San Francisco homicide detective Frank Falzon.

From collecting evidence to interrogating suspects, it's up to you to uncover the real story and make an arrest. With 40 fascinating characters and 20 Bay Area locations—over 80 minutes of full-motion video in all—SFPD HOMICIDE is the most authentic true-crime mystery ever created. Get it at your local software retailer. Or call 800-262-9791. Sorry, donuts not included.



Internet: <http://www.3Prongplug.com>



by John Wesley Hardin & Kathleen Film

Radio Free Online

Will the Internet Stop Video From Killing the Radio Star?

In 1995, it's hard to believe that 75 years ago radio had much of the same hype and mystique surrounding it that the Internet does today. People were excited by the possibilities, and an adventurous minority actually had access to the new, exciting technology.

The rather insipid state of modern FM and AM radio doesn't really compare with the anything-goes nature of the WWW. As far as most are concerned, the possibilities of radio have been fully explored, and the future lies elsewhere.

Not to downplay the great impact of radio on this century, but it just isn't an exciting technology today. With the exception of stereo in the 1960s, radio hasn't changed much as a medium since Marconi invented it in 1907.

Until today. While at first glance it may seem unlikely, the synthesis of radio and Internet is another mixture that promises to change the Internet and is already changing radio. With the Internet, radio stations can broadcast their content all over the world without needing to belong to a network, or, possibly, without even needing a radio transmitter.

Broadcasting out of their home station of KSCO AM 1080 in Santa Cruz, Calif.,

RadioNet (<http://www.radionet.com>) has a transmitter, but it is a show on the vanguard of a trend with the potential to change radio dramatically. RadioNet is a radio show with a twist. Every Sunday morning at 10 a.m. Pacific time, RadioNet takes phone callers like any radio show, but they also solicit user comments through e-mail and IRC comments from the WWW, making it more interactive than any radio show ever

hundreds, sometimes thousands of miles, but that's not a reliable way to broadcast, and FM transmissions are line of sight only. Internet broadcast frees radio stations of these physical constraints. Overnight, computers are opening up local shows to global markets.

"What makes it interesting, [is] there's no handbook to pick up on how to put audio on the Web," says Jeff Herman, producer of the ABC RadioNet site. "I feel like

(laughs) we'd be pretty stoked."

Unfortunately, RadioNet's sponsors don't seem as receptive to the possibilities of Internet broadcasting. "RadioNet is a very novel concept to so many people," comments RadioNet's Producer and Programmer Sheila Siden, "it's really an amazing thing to combine radio with the Internet, because what we've done is created a radio show with a shelf life. In the past a radio show was perishable: The minute the words escaped the radio, it was gone. Now we're able to capture it and put it on the Internet. So you take that intangible radio and combine it with something that is also intangible (the Internet) and it's so esoteric that



before. While this is unusual, what takes the show beyond the ken of normal radio broadcast is their use of RealAudio technology (see sidebar) to broadcast their show live on the Internet.

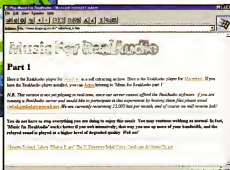
Internet broadcasting instantly overcomes one of the biggest inherent limitations of radio: range. AM signals can bounce off the ionosphere and travel

we're kind of inventing this new way of publishing information."

John Bates of RadioNet puts it this way: "Our market used to be a few hundred square miles. Now as long as people understand English and have an Internet connection, they can listen to our show. If we could get that across to our sponsors

most people don't really understand."

Of course, RadioNet is not forsaking all the traditional avenues of radio broadcasting. The show is broadcast live via satellite, on the Talk America Radio Network, to over 20 affiliate stations



"Radio on the Net is sort of like an underground radio station. It's like having a pirate setup except that I'm not violating any laws."

— iRock's G.J. Goldwyn

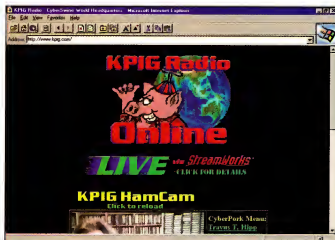
around the country, from Oregon to Massachusetts. Does RadioNet's main chance lie in network syndication or in Internet transmission? "That's the question of the day" says Siden. "I've been talking about that nearly daily with people, and I think we need to have both radio and Internet. If we go 100 percent Internet, then we have a totally different audience." Sheila is afraid that by concentrating on Internet broadcasting, RadioNet would lose the radio listeners who were tuning in to learn the basics about computing and the Net.

In that light, Siden has been concentrating on developing the radio side of RadioNet. "I think we need to be in more major cities; San Francisco, Los Angeles,

"My philosophy is simple: I make good radio and good music." And if anyone finds a problem, they can simply hit elsewhere. Fair enough.

"Radio on the Net is sort of like an underground radio station," the '70s radio veteran continues. "It's like having a pirate setup except that I'm not violating any laws."

At the same time, Goldwyn explains that even with this new technology, hundreds of would-be *Pump Up The Volume*-ites probably won't be springing up across the country. "True, it's easy. But it's costly. You need a Tq line for a server or you get cramped after a thousand listeners. Then you have to deal with music licensing and attorneys, so it basically costs the same to have a



New York." Siden also feels too isolated from the listeners. "The average person just listens. Back when I was a listener to RadioNet I was kind of in the same boat where I would just listen. I couldn't even clean house while I listened to it. Considering our market, a lot of people really don't have anything to say."

But even if they did, some Net D.J.s wouldn't necessarily want to hear it. "If geeks or idiots complain about my show, then I forbid them to listen," remarks iRock's G.J. Goldwyn (<http://www.irock.com>).

regular station."

That doesn't totally rule out "pirates," though. "You could do it with a CD player," he admits, "but I don't know how many listeners you're going to maintain."

But whether it's from RadioNet, RealAudio or yourself, live broadcast over the Internet will be an important part of the next decade's impending info-smorgasbord. The combination of radio and Internet surely won't return us to the Golden Age of radio, but it may well be a part of the Golden Age of the Internet. ●

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If You Could See What I Hear

Critics say that AM quality voice transmission over the Internet is no different from telephoning on the cheap, so what's the big deal? "Well, I'm sorry but there's something fundamentally more powerful going on here," replies RadioNet's John Bates. "RealAudio is a real enabler for us."

What RealAudio and other helper applications like it do is read a file as it comes into your computer. It's similar to downloading any file off the Net, but the player interprets and plays the audio stream as it is downloaded. Not only does this allow you to hear sound files much faster, but it gives the capability to send live feeds over the Internet.

"All of a sudden we were able to compress our two-hour radio show, about 200 Megs of information, down into 2 Megs of information, and make it available in real-time download so all people have to do is start this stream."

Rob Glaser, RealAudio's founder, is convinced that he is on to something big. Glaser once ran Microsoft's multimedia and consumer systems and was in charge of establishing the standards for multimedia PCs (MPC), so he's no wide-eyed kid.

"What we've done is make it practical to deliver live and on-demand audio-based content on a global basis."

Audio is great, but isn't this all going to go away when we have widespread video-conferencing and CU-SeeME? No, says Glaser. "We also have a focus on continually going back to the technical drawing board and improving as much as possible." Future enhancements will include better quality audio, higher bit rates, scalable bandwidth and delivering audio-visual information.

According to analyst Marty Levine, editor of the *Digital Technology Report*, there's no question that the technology will be in widespread use. The question is what happens when that day comes. "Issues involved in transmitting audio over the Internet relate far more to copyright issues than they do to technology."

Soon, Internet bandwidth will allow for CD-quality audio.

"It's a combination of economics and technology today; tomorrow it's a copyright issue," says Levine. "If you have 100,000 people who will listen to an AM-quality talk show, you may have 1 million people who would listen to a preview of the next Rolling Stones album."

The upshot is that someone is going to want you to pay for that preview, and it's quite likely those same someones won't want you to copy and give or sell it to others. "Recordable CD is here now," Levine points out in response, "and it's only getting more readily available."

The RealAudio player is available for downloading at (<http://www.realaudio.com/>). Minimum system requirements

are a 486/33 SX or better PC running Microsoft Windows 3.1x, Windows NT or Windows 95. The Macintosh version requires System 7 or higher on a 25 MHz 68030 processor or better, or a Power Mac with 8 MBytes RAM.

One competing technology exists, and that is Xing Technologies StreamWorks. It supports scalable speeds of transmission from 8.5kbps to 112kbps and live video. In the current version at ISDN rates (112kbps - 128kbps), it can receive 30fps full-motion video with monaural sound at approximately quarter-screen resolution. It's readily and charmingly available at <http://www.xingtech.com/>, in Windows, Mac and Unix versions. ●

"What we've done is make it practical to deliver live and on-demand audio-based content on a global basis." - RadioNet's Sheila Siden

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Take A Walk On The Wired Side

What's that? You say you want to listen to radio on your computer, but you don't want to listen to a computer radio show? You're in luck, camper.

Internet Radio Hawaii (<http://www.hotspots.hawaii.com/IRH-Home.html>) is an Internet-only radio station in Hawaii. As part of the burgeoning Hawaiian culture resurgence, IRH plays traditional Hawaiian music, and has resources for Hawaiians who want to learn more about their own culture.

Bantam Doubleday Dell Online (<http://bdd.com/athwk/bddathwk.cgi/10-13-95/newbook>) has excerpts of best-selling books online. Recent lineups include *Darksaber* by Kevin J. Anderson, a new novel in the *Star Wars* saga.



Carving Knife Records (<http://www.peak.org/~flux/ckr/ckr.html>) is chock-full of attitude. "This is a punk

WWW site. We will use language that some pussy-foots might find offensive. We don't care if this bothers you." In addition to real punk cache, you can go to the listening booth and find downloadable RealAudio files of the punks that these punks love.

cnet Radio (<http://www.cnet.com/index.html>) is one of the newest RealAudio sites, with hourly news, convention updates, technology stories and more. cnet is already a cool site, and RealAudio drops the temp by at least five degrees.

Music For RealAudio (http://www.ibmcpug.co.uk/~irdial/real_b.htm) is a bit misleading. It's an experiment to produce music that purposefully is designed not to survive RealAudio's compression/decompression cycle. When the

music is played, each listener hears something different. These people have too much time on their hands.



Plan 9 From Outer Space (<http://www.w2.com/docs2/c4/plan.html>) Yes, you can now listen to the entire original motion-picture soundtrack from the worst film ever made. One hour and 10 minutes of frighteningly bad film is enough to satisfy the most psychotronic among us. Oh, yeah, you can also buy the soundtrack here, too, and read a history of the film.

Find more RealAudio sites at the **RealAudio Homepage** (<http://www.realaudio.com/raguide.cgi>). ☐



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THE

new name in next-gen systems is

ULTRA

and Nintendo's new 64-Bit is the

FACTOR



Nov. 24, 1995, was a crowning day in the final chapter of one of the gaming industry's most protracted hardware launches.

With all eyes leveled at the Shoshinkai Show in Japan that Friday, Nintendo's global boss, Hiroshi Yamauchi, laid out the plans that his company had only days before worked to conceal from the press, consumers and competitors alike. In addition to answering many of the pivotal questions that have dogged Nintendo's foray into the next-generation console battle, the company finally pulled away the veils covering the most important part of the Ultra 64 equation: the software that it will play.

For months, Nintendo has remained a mysterious third player, touting partnerships and hardware power while rivals Sony and Sega continued to eat up the market of consumers ready to lay down more than \$200 for a taste of what only powerful arcade games could do a year ago. While the Saturn popped up on store shelves ahead of schedule and Sony methodically introduced their PlayStation to overwhelmingly popular support, Nintendo continued to issue press releases.

It had to be an awfully hard position for the once dominant video game super power to find itself in.

Now that has all changed. With the passing of a single day, Nintendo has finally stepped up to the plate to show the world that it means business. As the company president officially introduced the U/64 to the trade at Shoshinkai, it became apparent that the number-one question surrounding the Ultra 64 has now been answered: Nintendo had delivered.

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IT EXCEEDS
JUST ABOUT
EVERYONE'S
EXPECTATIONS..."

NINTENDO OF AMERICA
VICE PRESIDENT
PETER MAIN

THE ULTRA 64

The history of the future started more than three years ago...

The Ultra 64 was originally introduced more than a year ago under the code name "Project Reality." This was widely seen as a suspect title considering the reputation for vaporware that Nintendo had developed: for example, their promising new hardware platforms like the Nintendo PlayStation (a joint venture with Sony that never quite materialized) and the long-anticipated Super NES CD-ROM that was fully spec'd but never developed.

At that time, all of the major gaming powerhouses, including new upstart Sony (who were determined to bring the PlayStation to market on their own) were following the lead of an American manufacturer that was gaining widespread praise from the financial communities for a top-secret project known as the Opera. What would eventually become the 3DO managed to incite competitors into believing that the need and consumer demand for high-end video-game systems with price tags in excess of \$700 had finally arrived.

They were wrong.

As a consequence of feeding into the fervor surrounding the 3DO, all of the next-gen platforms that have since been introduced have been relatively high-priced machines based on CD-ROM storage mechanisms.

Project Reality, meanwhile, took a different direction. Pairing Nintendo's knowledge of the video-game marketplace with the technical wizardry of new computer company Silicon Graphics, Nintendo planned to

counter these competitors by producing a state-of-the-art machine that would essentially "leapfrog" the existing technologies and provide gamers with environments straight out of *Jurassic Park* and *gameplay*, courtesy of Nintendo.

Officially dubbed the Ultra 64 almost a year ago, Nintendo has carefully controlled the release of

that their Ultra 64 would claim over the competition. The only problem was that there was, in fact nothing to prove that the U/64 existed beyond promotional tapes and slick graphics cooked up courtesy of Nintendo's partners at Silicon Graphics.

So going into the Shoshinkai exhibition in Tokyo on Nov. 24, Nintendo knew they had to deliver. Anything short of providing the industry and press with a sample of the Ultra 64 playing experience would come across as yet another attempt to hide platform woes. The press would trumpet the delay as being a bad sign. A very bad sign.



Mario 5



Pilot Wings 64

information to pique consumer and industry interest while it continued to battle with other systems that had since been released. Aware that the 18-month head start that they had given Sega contributed to Nintendo's misfortunes in the 16-Bit arena, the company has consistently touted the advantages and technical superiority



going one on one with the ULTRA 64 at Shoshinkai...

Software is the fuel that makes the hardware run, and the display at Shoshinkai succeeded in partially sating the question of whether or not the Ultra 64 was for real. Although the look and feel of the games that were on display impressed nearly everyone, no one can really evaluate the new console from the exposure granted at Shoshinkai. At its unveiling, Nintendo only made two games available and one of those, *Kirby's*

Ball 64, looked so much like Kirby's *Dream Course* for Super NES this it hardly seemed worthy of running on a 64-Bit machine. Others were showcased on a press tape (see the reviews on page 50), but one cannot make an accurate evaluation of the Ultra 64 based on the handling of a single game that is only half completed (*Super Mario 64*).

The unveiling at Shoshinkai did, how-

"The quality is way beyond the Sony can achieve on the Ultra 64 is completely

ever, reveal enough about the Ultra 64 to determine that the machine is unique and highly qualified to compete against the Saturn and PlayStation—provided Nintendo couple the technical magic the machine's capable of performing with solid gameplay that truly delivers more than digital cotton candy.

In addition to a highly adaptable controller that Nintendo world President Hiroshi Yamauchi proclaimed as the system's strongest feature, the Ultra 64 showed off some of the most dazzling graphics ever displayed on a console machine. Powered by a 94 MHz spin-off of the Silicon Graphics "Reality Engine," the U64 reflects the technology that has made Silicon Graphics the leading name in computer graphics.

While the Sega Saturn and Sony PlayStation can handle large, detailed sprites and characters, the Ultra 64 takes the concept to a much higher level. At the E' show in Los Angeles last

.....

**The Ultra 64
showcased
some of the
most dazzling
graphics ever
displayed
on a console
machine.**

.....

May, Nintendo had a Silicon Graphics workstation running an animation of a shark that twisted and moved with streamlined realism. Skeptics looked at the demo and said, "Great, but what can an Ultra 64 do?"

In *Super Mario 64*, one of the playable games shown at Shoshinkai, Mario swam through waters patrolled by that exact shark. In fact, there were several sharks, all large characters swimming with that same lifelike animation. And Mario, swimming his believable version of the breast stroke, looked far more convincing than the sharks.

If the power of the Ultra 64 sounds heady, the cost of the system is surprisingly light. Targeted to go on sale in Japan on April 21 with a street price of 25,000 yen (about \$250 in the U.S.), the machine seems poised to make a run at current next-gen leader Sony.



THE U/64 CONTROLLER

The Ultra 64 controller is, in the words of Nintendo President Hiroshi Yamauchi, "the key to a unique gaming experience."

In fact, the Nintendo team feels so strongly that the U/64 interface will revolutionize the way games are played, that Yamauchi went on to tell the press "if you think this is just another controller, you don't know anything about video games."

Strong words? No doubt. Can Nintendo back them up? Without question.

What makes the U/64 controller so unique is that it's actually three game pads in one. Unlike the "kidney-shaped" controller of the Saturn or the handle grips of the PlayStation, the U/64 has a rather peculiar three-handed design.

Nintendo's concept takes a little while to master. Boasting 10 buttons on the face and underside, the controller has a standard directional pad in the top left corner and thumb-sized analog joystick over the middle handle. By holding the outside handles and using the crosshair

directional pad, you can use the device like a normal Nintendo game pad. By also including the analog stick, U/64 games give you the unique ability to conduct multiple actions, controlling characters and camera angles simultaneously (used effectively in *Pilot Wings 64*).

The controller doesn't stop there. Similar to the PlayStation memory cards, Nintendo has integrated a feature into the controller that will enable players to utilize memory functions, call up information, upgrade and tailor characters and levels (new tracks in racing games or characters in fighting games) as well as an additional "save data" feature. ♦



• Memory cards, analog stick and conventional game pad have been melded into one controller

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WHAT WE KNOW

- System price will be \$250
- There will be three games at launch; 30 games will be out in '96
- There will likely be no pack-in game
- A magnetic storage unit will be released



ULTRA KILLER INSTINCT'S EYEDOL & COMBO

Games are expected to clock in at a reasonable \$60-70; a far cry from the \$100+ that critics were quoting before the show. "The U.S. price points on Nintendo Ultra 64 software should be in the \$60-70 range as I originally indicated was consistent with where we currently are...with 16-Bit releases," explained Nintendo's Vice President of Marketing and Sales Peter Main.

Perhaps the only real weakness to the Ultra 64 is the lack of games. Sony and Sega are working with hundreds of licensees and churning titles out on an almost daily basis. Nintendo, outwardly at least, appears content to work with its select group of "Dream Team" talent who will reportedly have only three games available at launch. According to Nintendo's Yamauchi, approximately 30 games are presently under development, 13 of which were made visible in some form to attendees at Shoshinkai.

Nintendo's strategy of limiting developer access is suspect. While it would be foolish to expect great games from Sony's 300 developers, odds are that over the next year Sony will have a lot more winning titles to stack up against the Ultra 64's assortment of in-house and third-party offerings.

But what about the games?

Since one can hardly judge a system on a single game, all that is left to judge is the game itself. After years of hype and mythic-sounding predictions, it is safe to say that nothing even hinted at the technological achievement of *Super Mario 64*. It's one thing to disbelieve fancy Silicon Graphics-created animations; it's quite another mind-bender when control of those animations is put in the palm of your hand.

The game on display was only 50 percent completed when shown, so there was no way to play all the way through it. The fragments that were ready begin with Mario standing outside a great castle. If you're imagining that old, two-dimensional Mario that simply ran left and right, forget it.

This is the plumber of the '90s with three-dimension construction including facial expressions and moving limbs. All of the familiar characters are back, including the ghosts, B bombs and Koopas, only now they fill the screen and employ a totally three-dimensional, rendered look.

The first task in the game is to get



GoldenEye 007



Kirby Ball 64



Mario Kart 64

Mario through the front door of the castle. This is no side-scrolling thumbcandy either! The castle grounds are completely interactive with trees, lakes and other challenges to explore.

Once you get into the castle, you guide Mario to various numbered rooms. Room number four holds nothing but a large painting of water. This is a portal and when Mario jumps through the canvas you enter a deep cistern.

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This is where you encounter the aforementioned sharks. While exploring the depths, Mario must capture oxygen containers to provide additional air to stay submerged or he drowns and the game begins back at the castle.

All of this action takes place in an environment that is so three-dimensional that it looks like a cross between puppetry and cartooning. Miyamoto, the creator of the Mario series of games, uses his author's license to make games his way, preferring art to realistic computer renderings. It's eye-popping!

Other levels that were featured at the show include an arctic wasteland filled with slippery ice-capped hills



Blast Dozer

and perhaps the most impressive scene: a confrontation with the fiery King Koopa. Some of the most amazing Ultra 64 effects occurred during this round of play that features an opponent that is easily five times the size of Mario and fully articulated in the same 3-D style as the rest of the game's characters. To eliminate the threat, Mario swings the monster by his tail and swabs him around at lightning speed!

If this sounds more like a movie than a video game, you're getting the point. Though it is as interactive as any of the earlier Mario games, the Ultra 64 incarnation utilizes an almost surrealistic quality never before achieved in a video game. No other software has even come close to duplicating these effects.

Not everything is perfect about the game. In an effort to demonstrate the machine's power, you often find the shifting camera angles to be more bothersome than they are worth, and learning to navigate in a simulated three-dimensional environment takes a little getting used to.

RATING THE U/64 GAMES

by the
fusion
staff

Please note that many of these titles are being reviewed for their aesthetic appeal and the use of the U/64's abilities on a comparative basis. Outside of *Kirby Ball 64* and *Super Mario 64*, the rest of the games were reviewed on these merits alone from videotape.



Title: *Super Mario 64*
Publisher: Nintendo of America
Overview: Nintendo plays it safe with the lead-off title for the U/64, a three-dimensional version of their earlier side-scrolling adventures.
Rating: A



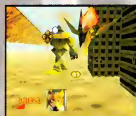
Title: *Super Mario Kart R*
Publisher: Nintendo of America
Overview: The company's 64-Bit upgrade to the original 16-Bit *Mario Racer* provides more realistic environments and camera angles but remains similar.
Rating: B



Title: *Pilot Wings 64*
Publisher: Nintendo of America
Overview: One of the many updates that carry the 64 suffix, this title again enjoys the benefits of the U/64's enhanced graphics.
Rating: A-



Title: *Kirby Ball 64*
Publisher: Nintendo of America
Overview: Very similar to *Kirby's Dream Course*, this looked nice but hardly seemed worthy of running on a 64-Bit system.
Rating: B-



Title: *Star Fox 64*
Publisher: Nintendo of America
Overview: One of the most impressive-looking games on the Nintendo tape, although gameplay wasn't tested. Lots of polygon ships fill the screen with no problem.
Rating: A



Title: *WaveRace 64*
Publisher: Nintendo of America
Overview: A water-racing game with realistic wave effects and surroundings that should make for an exhilarating alternative to *Super Mario Kart R*.
Rating: A-

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THE ULTRA 64

Where is the U64 going to go from Here?

One of the testaments to the design of any piece of hardware (but especially video-game consoles) lays in its ability to remain flexible and provide users with low-cost upgrades in the future. The roads are strewn with the shells of gaming systems that touted their upward compatibility at launch only to become obsolete when the manufacturer instead opted to introduce a new piece of hardware altogether. With the notable exception of the Genesis, few games systems have ever delivered on the promises that some hidden expansion port seemed to offer.

That could change radically with the Ultra 64.

"We have repeatedly indicated that we are not going to get into CD-ROM,"

explained Nintendo's Howard Lincoln, "which is, simply put, the flavor of the day." What Nintendo is willing to invest in is a new type of writable magnetic disk that will, according to Lincoln, "...contain more than sufficient memory for game storage and also have a very fast access speed." The Magni-Disc will be sold separately as an accessory for the Ultra—possibly as early as the end of 1996 with *Legend of Zelda 64* as the lead title.

Another area in which Nintendo appears to be following Sony's lead is in the use of memory storage cards that can secure playing data and allow positions, scores and settings to be saved for later retrieval. The memory cards that plug into the U/64 controller, however, will also be designed to carry patches, game upgrades and more (imagine adding new tracks to your racing game by simply clicking in a new memory card).

"Nintendo is missing the boat thinking the world wants to go back to the expensive and limited cartridge format."

3DO SENIOR VP OF
HARDWARE ENGINEERING
& OPERATIONS
TOBY FARRAND

PRETTY ON THE INSIDE:

Gathered together here are the system specs for the major players: the upcoming hopeful in the next-generation race, Nintendo's Ultra 64; the current front-runner, the Sony PlayStation; the catch-up system, the Sega Saturn and the dark horse, the elusive M2, whose system design is as yet unreleased, but promises to be compatible with all existing 3DO units.

Ultra 64



MAIN CPU: 64-Bit MIPS R4300 RISC (custom) @ 83.75 MHz
MEMORY: 36Mbit RAM (main)
GRAPHICS: 256x224 to 640x480 dot resolution
SOUND: Custom RCP 16-Bit audio, 44.1 kHz sample rate, up to 100 channels of wavetable synthesis
STORAGE: Memory cartridge

PlayStation



MAIN CPU: 32-Bit R3000A RISC @ 33 Mhz
MEMORY: 16Mbit RAM (main) 8Mbit RAM (video) 4Mbit RAM (audio)
GRAPHICS: 256x224 to 640x480 dot resolution
SOUND: ADPCM 16-Bit audio, 44.1 kHz sample rate, 24 channels
STORAGE: Memory card (128K, 15 slots per card)

Sega Saturn



MAIN CPU: 2 32-Bit Hitachi SH2 RISCs @ 28.8 Mhz
MEMORY: 16Mbit RAM (main) 12Mbit RAM (video) 4Mbit RAM (audio) 4Mbit RAM (buffer)
GRAPHICS: 320x224 to 720x528 dot resolution
SOUND: Yamaha FH1 16-Bit audio, 44.1 kHz sample rate, 32 channels
STORAGE: Backup RAM (512K)

M2 (3DO)



MAIN CPU: 64-Bit Power PC 602 RISC (custom) @ 66 Mhz
MEMORY: 48Mbit RAM (main) 320x240 to 640x480 dot resolution
SOUND: Custom DSP, 44.1 kHz sample rate, 32 channels with hardware decompression and interpolation
STORAGE: Internal RAM

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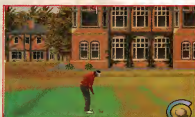
Your drive is a "slice" of life. Your short game is taking too long and your long game has come up short. Your putting has all but "puttered" out. And the "grass seems greener on the other side of the sandtrap." If all this is happening to your game, it's time...in fact it's TEE TIME to get "back to basics" with the FUN-damentals of golf.

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Adjust your stance to avoid
a slice or a hook!



The greens are beautiful . . .
but tricky!



The Ultra Man

Nintendo Bigwig Howard Lincoln
Answers the 64-Bit question

With the imminent debut of what might turn into the biggest console this industry has ever seen, many are dumbstruck and dizzy considering the repercussions. The masses wonder, "Who will be developing for the Ultra?" "Will it feature a cartridge pack-in?" "Can I supersize that and get the biggie fries?"

In response to this mass pondering, Chairman of Nintendo of America Howard Lincoln was kind enough to answer a few questions regarding the new system.

What are your thoughts on the Ultra controller?

I think this new controller will all by itself help revolutionize the video-game industry. It gives the entire development community the opportunity to do things that simply have not been possible before and it creates the potential for entirely new types of games.

We've heard 64-Bits before. What necessarily does this mean for the Ultra 64?

[The system] will contain between 64- and 96-Megabits of memory. By way of comparison, 64-Bit is twice the size of either of the 16-Bit *Donkey Kong Country* games now in the market. And we expect that if game developers are interested, they will in the future be able to make cartridges with a 256-Megabit capacity.

What exactly is the "bulk storage medium accessory"?

[It] is a magnetic disk accessory that we have been hard at work on for some time. We have repeatedly indicated that we are not going to

get into CD-ROM, which is, simply put, the flavor of the day. This is a writable magnetic disk accessory that will contain more than sufficient memory for game storage and also has a very fast access speed, but I cannot give you any further details or any technical specs at this point in time. [We] expect that this accessory will be previewing in playable form at the Shoshinkai Show one year from now. Don't be surprised if the first game you're going to see this vastly expanded storage medium is the Nintendo Ultra 64 version of the *Legend of Zelda*.

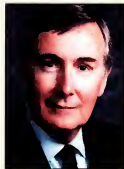
Has a decision been reached regarding a pack-in game? Possibly *Super Mario 64*?

We have not made a decision about whether we will pack-in software with Nintendo Ultra 64 for the U.S. or the European launch. Software is not going to be packed in with the system in the Japanese market. That is consistent with our launchers in Japan in the past of the Super NES, the Game Boy and what have you.

What is the current third-party licensing program?

The short answer is we have not either in Japan, the U.S. or Europe announced any third-party publishing program and I don't anticipate us doing that at this show. I do expect the first announcements on third-party publishing programs will come out of Japan, and it's conceivable that could happen before the end of this year.

In the U.S. or for North America we have a slightly different twist,



by
the
fusion
staff

we have a number of companies that have been appointed as early developers of Ultra 64 titles. All [are] under letter agreements, each providing that the company will get an early look at Ultra development specs and will be coming up with one Nintendo Ultra 64 game for the North American market—exclusive to the Ultra 64 for a period of one year from the date of the launch of the title. These early developers will form the core or the backbone of any third-party publishing program or development program that we announce.

What is the current state of these developers?

We have two types of developers. [There are] those 10 Dream Team publishers that we have announced, like Virgin and Acclaim. We also have second-party developers like RARE, DMA, Angel Studios and Paradigm, and some others I'm not at liberty to talk about right now. RARE is working on a *Killer Instinct* title and Angel Studios is working on a baseball game. There are several first titles being worked on in Kyoto at Nintendo.

As Mr. Yamauchi announced [at Shoshinkai], what we're trying to do with Nintendo Ultra 64 is not do traditional games in a 2-D type environment where Mario moves from left to right. Now the Mario game we're showing here is in a complete 3-D environment. The challenge that we have before us is to take this very powerful hardware system that allows for the creation of games in a 3-D environment and redefine what games are all about. ●

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Although Nintendo did not officially release the specifications for this new upgrade at the Shoshinkai Show, look for a complete review of the Magni-Disc product in an upcoming issue of *FUSION*.

Other areas of interest for Nintendo and the Ultra 64 include rumored conversations with Netscape about inserting Internet browser software within the Ultra 64.

"We've had continuing discussions with Jim Clarke and other people at Netscape," related Howard Lincoln. "As you know, Jim was the chairman of Silicon Graphics when we announced the Nintendo Ultra 64 project in August of 1993. The recent rumors that there was a deal between the

"Ultra 64 software should be in the \$60 to \$70 range."

VICE PRESIDENT
NINTENDO OF AMERICA
PETER MAIN



"We believe that the Ultra 64 will redefine this kind of entertainment."

PRESIDENT
NINTENDO OF AMERICA
HOWARD LINCOLN

two companies relative to some Internet project is unfounded. At this point we are simply in the discussion stage and we have not made any announcements about the use of the Nintendo Ultra 64 on the Internet and I don't anticipate anything in the [near future]."

Still, with Sega making major commitments to the Internet category, it is highly unlikely that Nintendo—with the unique relationship they have with SGI's former and Netscape's current visionary—would ignore this future business opportunity. How the browser would be accessed and whether or not it would be a self-contained or "one-way" selection of sites that users can tap into (as the Sega model is currently built around) remains unknown.

Regardless of what supplementary products and services Nintendo releases, it's clear to see that the company firmly believes the Ultra 64 will be the platform to carry their video-game business into the next century.

It's also evident that the engineers responsible for creating Nintendo's first foray into the next-gen console sweepstakes have designed the machine to offer the power that software developers and consumers alike are looking for, while providing the flexibility that will be a likely requirement to stay competitive in 1997 and beyond.

THE SHAPE OF GAMES TO COME

While the only two games that were available to play at Shoshinkai were *Super Mario 64* and *Kirby Ball 64*, Nintendo showcased over a dozen titles on a special videotape provided to select members of the press. Games on this video included



Legend of Zelda 64



Star Wars: Shadows of the Empire

Buggy-Boogie, BlastDozer, Star Wars: Shadows of the Empire, GoldenEye, Body Harvest Creator and Legend of Zelda 64.

Mysteriously absent from the show, however, were a number of high-profile titles that have been touted for some time as being launch vehicles for the Nintendo next-gen system. Included among this list are *Ultra Killer Instinct* and *Cruis'n USA*—byproducts of the Williams/Nintendo venture that got underway last year.

Other titles currently under development for the Ultra 64 include *FIFA Soccer* from Electronic Arts, *Turok* from Acclaim, *Robotech* from Gametek, *Monster Dunk* from Mindscape, *Red Baron* from Sierra On-Line, *Top Gun* from Spectrum Holobyte and *Doom* from Williams. ●

THE ULTRA 64

"We are very concerned about the quality issue for video games!"

NINTENDO OF AMERICA PRESIDENT HOWARD LINCOLN



an Nintendo and the Ultra
64 Beat Sony, Sega and
Matsushita?

There's no question that Nintendo, with help from their friends at Silicon Graphics, Rambus and others, have created a state-of-the-art video-game machine will once again revolutionize Nintendo's position in the market. But has the Ultra 64 revolutionized the market itself? Has Nintendo

succeeded in taking gaming to a level never seen before?

With both Sega and Sony already on store shelves, Nintendo must deliver software that does just this. Nintendo's Howard Lincoln believes that "a few companies will be looking to play catch-up," but the marketing and software have to be in place to drive the Ultra where Nintendo wants it to go.

There are few third-party licensees and Nintendo's first batch of games appear evenly split between mainstream and younger titles, although all are of extraordinary quality.

Even the release date, that has now been firmly pegged in Japan for April 21, seems uncomfortably absent when Nintendo executives talk of

committing to a U.S. unveiling. Although most believe that the domestic launch will get underway a few days later on April 24, the final plan may change yet again.

While the Shoshinkai debut of the Ultra 64 answered some of the most pivotal questions relating to the machine's capabilities of displaying games and graphics worthy of other next-gen competitors, there are new questions that have been raised about which direction Nintendo plans to go with the system in the months and years to come.

For Nintendo to have the standard capable of taking them into the future in the face of continued erosion in the 16-Bit market and to shoulder a lack of support for other product lines such as the Virtual Boy, the Ultra 64 must succeed. Given Nintendo's past successes in marketing video-game hardware, combined with some truly breathtaking games, the U/64 appears to have the potential to deliver a gaming experience that lives up to any expectations that gamers may have. ●



f.y.i.

more info from the Internet

For anyone looking for more information on the launch of the U/64 or the games and game companies mentioned in this article, we suggest searching out the following addresses on the Internet:

NINTENDO Homepage:

<http://www.nintendo.com/low/low.html>

NUKE InterNETWORK:

<http://www.nuke.com>

IG's Nintendo U/64

Headquarters:

<http://www.igonline.escape.com/capscott/nu64-cap.html>

SGI's Project

Reality Page:

<http://www.studio.sgi.com/ProjectReality.html>

U64 DREAM TEAM

Since the first announcement of the Ultra 64, an elite group of hardware and software developers and publishers have been given unique access to the U/64 as well as its development and engineering data. Baptized the "Dream Team" by Nintendo, this group of high-profile names will be largely responsible for what you see and hear from that U/64 you buy next year...

HARDWARE:

• RAMBUS

Develops high-speed memory technology for the U/64.

• SILICON GRAPHICS

Develops the 64-Bit hardware system used in conjunction with the U/64.

DEVELOPMENT TOOLS:

• ALIAS RESEARCH

Markets a myriad of 3-D graphics tools for use with the U/64.

• MULTI-GEN

Produces real-time modeling tools for the U/64 licensees. Software Creations develops sound tools for the Ultra.

DEVELOPERS:

Angel Studios

DMA Design Ltd.

Paradigm Simulation, Inc.

RARE Ltd.

Software Creations

DEVELOPERS:

Acclaim Entertainment, Inc.

Electronic Arts

Gametek, Inc.

Mindscape, Inc.

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IBM SVGA DISPLAYS

A dark, industrial-themed studio set. At the top, a large, metallic, textured banner displays the word "STUDIO" in a stylized, blocky font. Below the banner, a large, circular, metallic object with a central hole is mounted on a stand. To the left, a butterfly is visible. In the center, a small, glowing orange circular platform is surrounded by various mechanical and biological props, including a large, segmented, metallic object and several small, dark, humanoid figures. To the right, a large, circular, metallic object with a central hole is visible. The overall atmosphere is dark and industrial, with various mechanical and biological props scattered throughout the scene.

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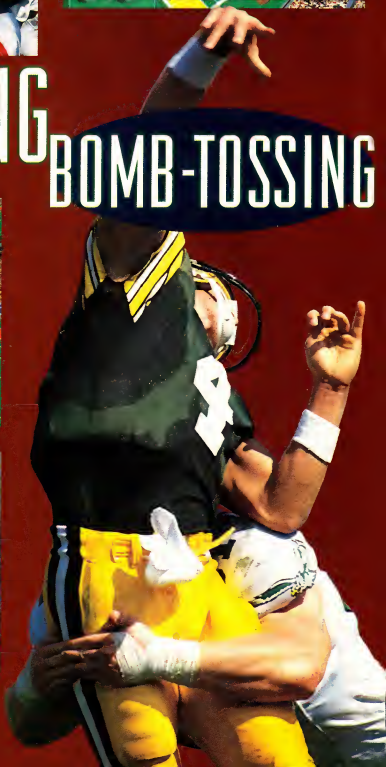


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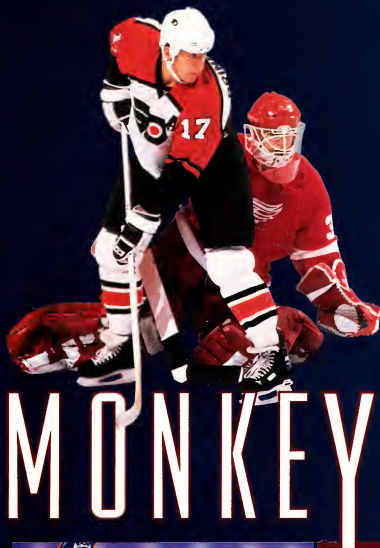
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NHL96



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ROCKET-LAUNCHING



If it's in the game,
it's in the game.

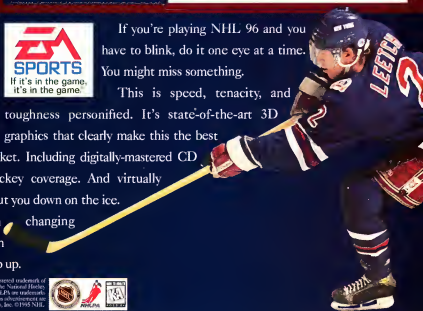
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Peter Jacobsen


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1994/95 PGA TOUR Statistics



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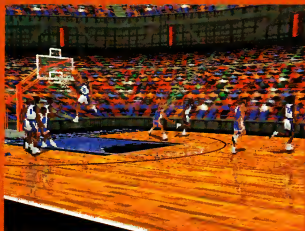
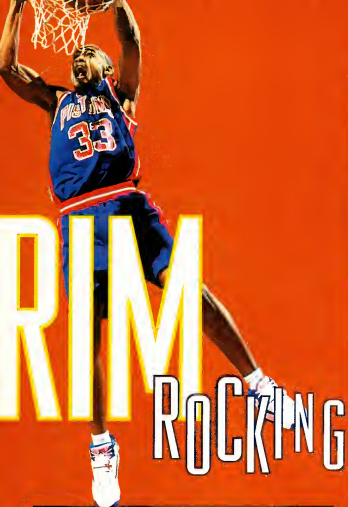
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WIDE
WEB**




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NOMAD is an ISLAND

The **FUSION** staff
rates some of the
best places and
times to play Sega's
portable Genesis.

Jail—

Informing your family of your incarceration doesn't have to be *that* bad, if you've got your Nomad, that is. "I'm in jail!" you'll happily say. "I like it here! I've got a system!"

True, they're even harder to come by in the joint than a good shiv and cost at least one black, tarry lung worth of cigarettes, but they're easily worth it. If you can provide for the batteries, your sentence'll fly by so quickly you probably won't even notice you're being punished at all.



In what may well signal the death of the Game Boy (and far more likely the Game Gear), Sega has recently released a portable version of their 16-Bit Genesis system.

Besides Sega upping the ante for portable units through sheer Bit size and a pre-established 500+ game library, the Nomad also benefits from its ability to plug into normal television sets through a separate hookup. This allows it to function in entirely the same way as a Genesis, for about the same price. Since many older Genesis titles are starting to be sold fairly cheaply at toy and game stores, this could possibly be the perfect time for the Nomad's introduction.

Other accessories for the system include additional controllers to allow for two players, an AC Adaptor and/or rechargeable battery pack to save on batteries (this thing *devours* them) and a car lighter adaptor for those long road trips. All these combine to ensure the Nomad carries no fixed address. The following is a list of some of the best circumstances to have the wee system.

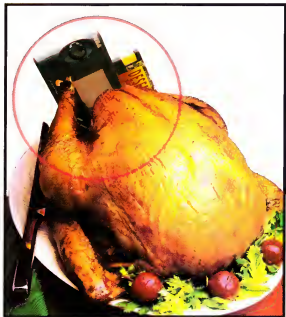


Business Meetings—

Being pulled into a quarterly report can test even the most well rested. That's where the Nomad comes in. Simply explain that you're product testing for R & D. When your boss starts drawing graphs citing the increased sales ratio between guns and butter, at least your eyes will be open...

Pondering One's Own Mortality—

Every gamer knows the sinking feeling that comes in the time between new hardware systems. When the really invigorating titles start petering out and the new Bit systems seem so far in the future, existence just doesn't seem as bright and cheery. But mopers rejoice, now there's a system to accompany you while you wander around, mind thick in the haze of clinical depression. Remember these words of advice, though: When you peer into the abyss, don't drop your system.



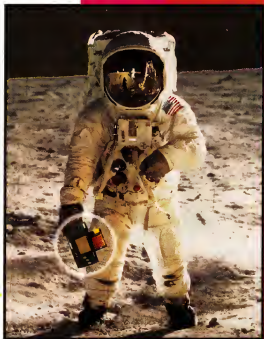
Waiting For the Holiday Dinner—

A good holiday turkey takes what? Nine hours to stew in its own juices and cook? That's a lot of time to spend avoiding tense moments with your adult family and dodging the wee ones beneath your feet. You've got plenty of time to kill: Doesn't a thousand rounds of *MKII* sound just about right?

Space Flight—

As any astronaut can readily attest, floating around dodging your partner's vomit gets old after a few days. The scenery outside isn't even as disparate as the drive from Chicago to Ohio. What's going to hold your attention? Forget the ship, these things practically fly themselves these days. Try this baby out instead.

And meanwhile, if emergency situations *do* arise, the Nomad can easily be refitted to flush dangerous carbon monoxide from the ship's cabin. Just be careful to turn the Nomad and other electronic devices off when leaving and entering the Earth's atmosphere.



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top hottest game developers

Gaming is advancing like never before. With new technology spawning new systems and new systems spawning new games, an elite group of video-game designers have risen above the pack. As they usher in a new age of gaming with both an understanding of gamers' wildest dreams and the talent and creativity to make those dreams a reality, the editors of *FUSION* tracked down the top five up, coming and already arrived movers and shakers of the industry to find out what makes them tick.

WORMZ IN THE HOOD

Rubbing elbows with the DreamWorks SKG big cheeses Spielberg, Katzenberg and Geffen might cause a guy to get a swelled head, especially if they had sought you out, signed your newly formed company to a three-game deal and pretty much left it up to you to determine what to create.

This dream-come-true for most game designers is a reality at the Neverhood, Doug "Earthworm Jim" TenNapel's new studio. TenNapel has managed to stay very down to earth in light of all his success in his short four-year career, a virtue he attributes to surrounding himself with his friends, who have no trouble making sure their boss' ego stays in check.

"They really keep me in line," TenNapel says. "We have very open communication. We make fun of each other a lot. That's important to me. None of these guys think of themselves as employees, and I don't think of them as my employees. I think of them as my friends. Because of that, we can work together. [E]veryone feels like they're a part of a team. Everyone feels like they're a peer...and I'm going to have these friendships long after this business is done."

The DreamWorks deal seems to be the perfect situation for the young designer, because TenNapel and his crew are left to do what they do best—create games, and at the Neverhood, they do so without pressure to stick to a proven formula or seek out characters.

"I think at other places I've worked there is that pressure," TenNapel says. "They say, 'Oh you came up with this character, so now crank out another character like this.' Well, anyone who knows anything about our next game, *The Neverhood*, knows we didn't reverse engineer the characters out of a toy line. People can see through that garbage.



What we try to do is make a strong game; it has to stand up as a game."

While *The Neverhood* is now in full-scale production, the creative juices keep flowing for the game-designer-turned-animator-turned-writer, who is still involved in bringing *EWJ* to the big screen and oversees the *EWJ* cartoon.

"We're going to take *Jim* and twist it even more," he laughs. "For anyone who's still half-following the show, we'll be sure to lose them next year."

TenNapel has several animated series and two children's books in the works. He's also co-writing a *Pulp Fiction*-esque R-rated animated film, but that is no indication that

TenNapel is making a break from his good-natured projects aimed at kids.

"I want to be entertaining for kids," he explains. "I love nurturing creativity in young minds, and I feel very responsible for the stuff that I put in front of them. I don't just say, 'Hey parents, don't buy it if you don't approve of this gun-toting character.' I appreciate the kids who have supported the stuff that I've been involved with so far, because it's their approval that allows me to go on and do more things, so why would I betray that audience?"



Doug TenNapel

Age: 29

Marital Status:
Married, to Angie

Current Favorite Video Game:
Vectorman

All-Time Favorite: *Myst*

Pig-Out Food for Late-Night Design Sessions: Pizza

Favorite Comic Book: *Bone*

Last Good Movie I saw:
Toy Story

I Stay Home to Watch:
Letterman

Three words That Describe Me:
Lucky, Fortunate, Retarded

I Drive a: Beat-up Toyota pick-up truck with a brand-new radiator

Proudest Moment: Marrying my wife in 1990 was a real turning point in my life; a really cool moment.

Favorite Toys Growing Up:
Micronauts

WE'RE ALL DOOMED

In spite of what his guidance counselor may have warned, John Romero's doing pretty well for a kid who got low grades in high school. While his classmates were memorizing state capitals, fighting their way through trigonometry and conjugating verbs, the misunderstood Romero's mind was on fun and games.

"It was too boring," Romero explains. "I was too busy trying to write games. The thing that sucks is back then, there were no books on game design. Nowadays, there are tons of books on it, [and] it's great to get into it, even though it's a really tough market to break into. Back then, it was black art for real. Nobody knew how to do it. Learning it on your own was a lot tougher."

Bringing PC users titles such as *Castle Wolfenstein*, *Doom* and *Hexen* to take their minds off spreadsheets and memos for a while, Romero was able to start id Software with the profits of his first PC hit (*Commander Keen*), and continues to change the face of PC gaming.

"A lot of people in this industry don't remember things that we've done, because they weren't even around when we did this stuff. In 1990, we came out with *Commander Keen*, which was like a Mario-type game on the PC," he says. "PCs had never seen a Mario-type game, and everyone went nuts. We wrote this game in our spare time, put it out and BAM!—cash. It's awesome. We haven't flopped on anything."

Hoping to add to his list of hits, Romero is currently at work on *Quake*, which he expects to release next spring, but the release date as well as the premise of the game is still up in the air.

"It keeps changing," Romero says. "I can't really tell you what [*Quake's*] premise is, because it was one thing awhile ago, and it's been changed to something else now, and it might change again. It's pretty much killing

things in a really cool way."

Romero first got the designing bug in 1979 when he learned how to program.

"The first things I was programming were games. That's the only reason I got into programming—just little text adventure stuff, because I was writing them on HP mainframe terminals," he chuckles.

His first professional work came when he submitted a program to *Insider* magazine for a hundred dollars.

"That's how I'd do stuff from the very beginning," he says. "I'd write tons of games, and then I'd get them published either in magazines or on disc magazines."

Since then, Romero's games have been duplicated (*Doom* is estimated to be on 75 percent of PCs) and often imitated, but as long as the imitators do it right, Romero doesn't seem to mind.

"It's a totally open market," he says, "We just wish that they

would do it right, like *Dark Forces*.

Descent and *Dark Forces* are the only two products that we've seen that are truly cool. The rest just didn't get it."

As PCs continue to creep into every home and eventually become as common as TV, Romero's star is certain to continue to rise, but he also sees great

John Romero

Studio: id Software

Age: 28

Marital Status: Married, two sons ages 7 and 8

Currently At Work On: *Quake*

Fave Current Game:
Secret of Mana and *Secret of Evermore*

Fave Game Ever: *Ultima 5*

Last Good Movie I saw:
True Lies

Fave TV Show: *Talk Soup*

Three Words That Describe Me:
Busy, busy, busy

I Drive a: Ferrari 348, Ferrari Testarossa

Favorite Pig-Out Food During Late-Night Work Sessions:
Pizza and Chinese food.

opportunity for console games as well.

"Consoles are starting to get into the multiplayer arena, which is the future of gaming. It's cool to see that the

Sony PlayStation and the Saturn are moving into Internet access, moving into multiplayer gaming," Romero explains. "It's kind of interesting. They're getting into downloading games into the systems. Multiplayer is definitely the future of games."



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Perry Rodgers

Studio: Sony Interactive Studios

Age: 33

Marital Status: Single

Current Favorite Game:
Jumping Flash!

All-Time Favorite Game:
The original *Super Mario Bros.* arcade game

Favorite Comic Book: *Spawn*

The Last Good Movie I Saw:
Hoop Dreams

I Drive a: Mitsubishi 3000GT

I Stay Home to Watch:
The Simpsons, Beavis and Butt-head, Golden State Warriors basketball games and tennis.

Three Words That Describe Me:
Organized, focused, passionate about what I do.

I'd Give Anything to Meet:
"One thing I always thought I'd love to do is hit a few balls with John McEnroe."

Favorite Toy Growing Up:
My Pachinko Machine

KOMBAT VETERAN

Blame Sony Interactive Studio's Perry Rodgers for bringing carnage into living rooms like never before by flawlessly adapting the third installment of *Mortal Kombat* chaos for the Sony PlayStation in all of its realistic and gory playability.

"[With] the technology of the PlayStation as good as it is, what we wanted to do was make it a very real adaptation or conversion of *MK3*."

Rodgers says of his year-long project. "We thought we could really do justice to it. The most difficult part was pushing the system to do that and make it very authentic, so players really felt that it was *MK3*."

Rodgers says that the advances of gaming technology may be a blessing in disguise for designers.

"It's really interesting," says Rodgers. "You would claim that it would be easier to do the games of today over yesterday, but you always want to push the limits of

your technology...players expect more."

Rodgers' current work is *Philosoma*, a 3-D graphic shooter heavy on cinematics and story. "It takes shooters to a new dimension," he says. "It shows off what the PlayStation can do."

Rodgers has come a long way since he began his career with Activision, converting the arcade version of *Double Dragon* for the Atari 2600 and 7800. For

Rodgers, however, there were early signs that hinted at what his future held in store.

"As a kid, I had one of those little plastic pinball machines that you bought at Sears. I tore that apart and all the bumpers off of it and tried to build my own."



While in college, instead of breaking toys, Rodgers broke a world record in the Guinness interim video-game contest for the *Super Mario Bros.* arcade game, which Rodgers still looks back on as one of his proudest moments.

"It was a big moment. Right now you look back on it and say that was kind of trivial, but I was competing with a player that was pretty well known, Erik Jenner, and it was kind of a boost as far as something that I really worked very hard to achieve. It taught me that hard work pays off, and it has more meaning than my name in a book."

While video games remain his passion, Rodgers looks for other outlets to take his mind off work and to maintain a balance, which he finds in the form of exercise and sports, especially tennis.

"If I could make it on the tennis circuit, I'd be playing tennis," he says.

The disciplined Rodgers even manages to fight off the legendary urges for pizza, pork rinds and Pepsi that designers are known to pig out on during the late hours of deadlines. "If I said [I ate] pizza and doughnuts and all that good stuff, I'd be lying to you," he admits. "I really try to eat healthy. I like to run, eat right and get enough sleep, because in the long run, that just keeps you going. You're not going to get burned out."

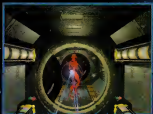
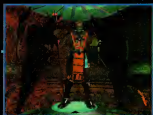


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SHINY HAPPY PEOPLE

When he's not working on a new video game or playing an old one, there's a good chance that Shiny Entertainment's Grand

Poobah, Dave Perry, is probably out masterminding a new title. Then again, it's even more likely that he's singing Barry Manilow tunes in the shower or off somewhere munching on Pringles with his mouth open while the crumbs get all over his shirt. Breaking this nasty habit, however, is at the top of his resolution list for 1996.

It's Perry's off-the-wall sense of humor that powers the company which brought fans the quirky *Earthworm Jim*, but make no mistake: Beneath his fun-loving exterior is a fun-loving interior,

but even beneath that lies the business savvy that helped make Shiny-designed *Aladdin*, both a critical and commercial hit.

So what is it that has kept Dave Perry running throughout his 13-year career?

"Pizza, pizza, Alka-Seltzer and more pizza," he says. "I started making video games when I was 15 years old and sold them for \$50 a game."

Video games took a toll on his studies, however, as Perry admits to being a lousy student. "I kept playing Game Boy under the desk." That didn't keep him from landing his first job with Micro-Gen, however, where he began working on a game entitled *Pyjamarama* for a whopping \$5,500 per year.

His persistence and playfulness has paid off in a big way when Perry began his own studio and struck a quirky chord with gamers. "When I started Shiny, I asked Doug TenNapel to create some concept characters. *Earthworm Jim* was the first one."

With a line of toys, a cartoon, and the sequel to *Earthworm Jim* in stores now, Shiny is full of happy people, but Perry is tight-lipped about what his next project will be.

"I could tell you, but then I'd have to kill you and all of your readers one by one," he warns.

One thing the future definitely holds for Shiny Entertainment will be multiplayer games in 3-D environments, which are not only what Perry sees as the future of gaming, but are also his favorite games to play. In his personal life, however, Perry shows an enormous respect for the little things in life, citing his proudest moment as the day he learned how to walk (although he isn't quick to point out just how old he was when he mastered it) and his truly appreciative nature for the people who play his games.

"I personally love every Shiny fan," he gushes. "We will keep making the grooviest games just for you."

Dave Perry

Studio: Shiny

Age: 28

Marital Status: Married

Favorite Comic Book:
Dennis the Menace

Current Favorite Video Game:
Command and Conquer

All-Time Favorite Video Game:
3D Death Race

The Last Good Movie I saw:
The Sound of Music

I Stay Home to Watch: *Baywatch*

Three Words That Describe Me:
Tall, tall, very tall

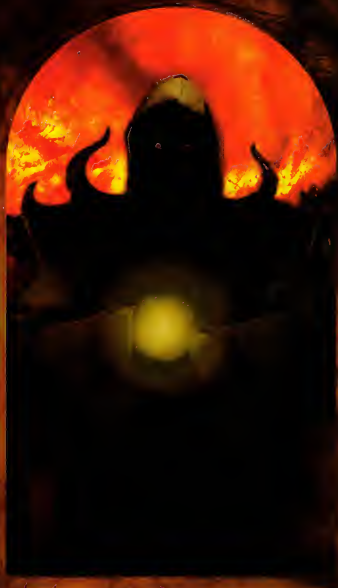
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RoAD WARRIORS

More than any creators making their mark on the PlayStation era, Mike Giam and Dave Jaffe are blazing a path for a new breed of 3-D video-game designers with two of the most innovative and entertaining games to play. Heavily influenced by movies and science fiction, in both Jaffe's *Twisted Metal* and Giam's *Warhawk*, they approach making games like film directors getting the most out of PlayStation's capabilities.

"*Twisted Metal* really came from two places," Jaffe explains. "Mike and I were driving back from the airport where we had just met with our developers, Single Trac, who are some of the most brilliant guys we've ever worked with. Driving back from the parking lot, some guy backed out—I don't think his rear lights were on, and he cut us off. I don't know if we had some *Raiders of the Lost Ark* music in the CD player or something, but we said, 'Man it would be so great just to blast that guy,' which I think is a

fantasy a lot of people have. The real genesis really, is our love of great movie car chases. As the technology got more powerful, we saw an opening where we could actually give players the feeling of being in on one of these classic Hollywood car chases."

Since the pair began as game testers for Sony one week apart from each other, they've worked together ever since and have solidified as a team, but both credit their executive producer, Allen Becker, as the key to their success. "He

has stood by us and encouraged us and basically kept everybody off our backs while we made the games," says Giam.

Another constant in Giam and Jaffe's career that has become an integral part of their team is Super Dodgeball Man.

"Ohhhh," the pair exclaims collectively when their cardboard cut-out good-luck charm is mentioned. "*Super Dodgeball* was a game that we played on break [as testers]," Jaffe explains. "Mike and I used to play the crap out of it; we loved it. The Dodgeball Man was from an old CES, and basically, as we kept moving up the ladder and kept moving offices, he just kept coming with us. Every now and then, people think we're crazy, we actually hold his hand and take him for a walk around the office. People think we're nuts, but he deserves it. He's a metaphor for ourselves and life in the '90s," he laughs.

"Super Dodgeball Man is the one who kept us company at Sony Imagesoft after hours," Giam adds affectionately. "Whenever we were working late, [he] was there." ●



Dave Jaffe

Studio: Sony Interactive Studios

Age: 24

Favorite Comic Book: Spider-Man

All-Time Favorite Video Game: Flashback and an old Apple IIE game called *Mask of the Sun*

The Last Good Movie I Saw: *GoldenEye*

I Stay Home to Watch: Public Access. It makes you feel much better about yourself.

I Drive a: 1987 powder-blue station wagon.

Favorite Pig-Out Food: Cheese pizza (no sauce), diet coke (tons)

Mike Giam

Studio: Sony Interactive Studios

Age: 27

Favorite Comic Book: Sandman

Current Favorite Video Game: *Twisted Metal*

The Last Good Movie I Saw: *Toy Story*

I Drive a: 1990 Toyota Celica

I'd Give Anything to Meet: George Lucas or Stan Winston

Favorite Pig-Out Food: Other half of pizza (with sauce), diet coke

Top: Dave Jaffe
Middle: Super Dodgeball Man
Bottom: Mike Giam





IN MEDIEVAL TIMES,

MAN SURVIVED USING ONLY HIS WITS.

OF COURSE, THOSE CLEVER ENOUGH TO MAKE

ONE OF THESE SURVIVED

A LITTLE LONGER.



FOR PC CD-ROM

ULTRA SPECTACULAR

FUSION Gives a Preliminary Review of a Much-Anticipated Bit of Hardware

Iur editors had the chance to test Nintendo's new 64-Bit game system—the Ultra 64—at the recent Shoshinkai Show held in Chiba, Japan, on Nov. 24, 1995. At this show there were over 70 game systems set up and they were playing two U64 games: *Super Mario 64* and *Kirby Ball 64*. While far short of the 10 playable games originally promised, these two games were nevertheless extremely impressive and clearly demonstrated the incredible power that is within this machine.

The system itself is quite compact. Measuring only 10 1/4 inches wide, 7 1/2 inches deep and only 3 inches high, the U64 is small by game system standards. This is another testimony to Nintendo and Silicon Graphics' ability to pack such a large processing power into the minimum amount of space.

The outside of the Japanese Nintendo 64 (its Japanese name) is gray and has relatively few ports. On the top there is the cartridge slot; the front has four controller ports and the back has a power cord and one power port for sending the signal out to a TV/monitor. Since all of the systems were completely enclosed in plastic we could not see what other ports were on the underside.

On the very top left and right of the controller are the left and right (L & R) trigger buttons. In the very center of the unit and on the middle arm is the analog 3-D stick. By using your thumb you can control the character on the screen. You will have the ability to move your character anywhere within a 3-D environment, and being analog, this type of controller will allow for very fine and subtle movements in absolutely any direction. On the underside of the controller is the Z trigger button. This is in such a position that it will be able to work harmoniously with the analog stick.

It also is in such a position that it could imitate a trigger control for a gun. With three arms on this controller, there are three ways that the controller can be held. Depending on the type of game, each has its specific use. In the left position the 3-D stick is used with the right hand. This may be more comfortable for some of the newer games, which may not need any view changes. You use the right position for the 3-D games and the outside arm position for games that use normal Super NES-type controls.

The most innovative feature on this controller was the memory card on the underside of the unit. This card functions in the same way as the PlayStation card; however, it has the added feature of being portable. A player can play a game at home, save the game to the card and then take the controller and card to a friend's house and continue the game where he or she left off on the friend's machine. The controller can also be custom configured a certain way and this information would be downloaded into the friend's machine. Handicapping or keeping track of wins and losses in a fighting game has never been easier. Also, in a three- or four-player game all of the information from all of the memory cards would be sent to the machine for customized play. Overall, the control was large enough for bigger hands and the analog controller worked perfectly. Moving Mario around the screen was easy from the start and didn't require any practice. The buttons were responsive and while other games for other systems offered limited change of views, this unique



perspective control was a feature never before seen in a controller.

There was no slowdown noticed even in a four-player quad-split screen of *Kirby Ball*. Like the other next-generation systems, the colors number in the millions, so there was no advantage here. The texture mapping and 3-D screen movements were all real time. Nothing has been done this well on any of the other machines. The anti-aliasing and depth buffering were also real time and added to the feeling of actually moving around and participating in a virtual world. Clearly there is a lot of power in the U64, more than in any other game system. But one cannot say that it is the best because there are only two games to play, and the most complete is only half done.

On the downside, for the most part all we are seeing are old games redone in a 3-D environment. *Super Mario*, *Zelda*, *Star Fox*, *Pilotwings*, *Kirby*, *Mario Kart*, etc., have been done before. There is little that is truly creative and revolutionary. But perhaps as we see what more of the games are going to be like we will be able to judge whether this system is going to be another "kids' toy" or a system that will appeal to an older audience. Otherwise, from what has been shown so far, this is the most impressive piece of hardware we've seen.

—Ed Semrad

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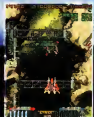


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Energized BUNNY

The PlayStation's *Jumping Flash!* accommodates all the elements of a trippy and vividly real 3 a.m. dream. The phantasmal game places the player in the shoes of a stalwart robotic bunny that must jump its way through strangely landscaped worlds in an effort to combat a host of equally surreal invaders. While that may sound strange, it hardly touches upon just how cool *Jumping Flash!*'s environments are—floating blimps, sandblasted Sphinxes, fire-breathing dragons and spiraling ice castles are only a few of the game's graphically powerful landmarks.

And best of all, the game is totally 3-D immersive. Except for slow, standstill rotation, the game character moves with wonderful agility. The most impressive effect comes when the jump button is depressed in three rapid successions—the techno-hare is sent leaping to immeasurable heights, and the 3-D effect is not unlike the feeling one gets in those museum, Grand Canyon OmniMax films.

Jumping Flash! is structurally familiar, consisting of five worlds, each containing three individual levels (with the third being a concluding boss stage). In the first two levels of each world, gamers must find the four scattered jet rockets (before time runs out) that will propel *Jumping Flash!* to the next level.

Of course, there's plenty of ammo so as to blast through the throngs of malcontent frogs, giraffes, pelicans and other assorted animal adversaries and gather those blasted rockets. Aside from the unending supply of bunny bullets, you might find special-effect fireworks like cherry bombs, roman candles and firecrackers that do some real heavy carnage. Power-ups appear in the form of carrot bundles, and secret bonus worlds await in the clouds above.

Essentially, there are plenty of peripheral weapons and surprises to continually bait the gamer and help him or her push through to higher and higher levels. But while *Jumping Flash!* is challenging, it might be too rapidly completed by more advanced gamers. And this is where the game, ever so slightly, is wanting of perfection. That, and the relatively unchanging soundtrack. Otherwise, Sony has themselves an impeccable and remarkably original adventure game.


—Rob Bernstein



Jumping Flash!

- PUBLISHER: Sony ■ SYSTEM: PlayStation
- THEME: Adventure ■ MEGS: N/A ■ PLAYERS: 1
- LEVELS: 5

12341/25



You've played
Mortal Kombat®, Street
Fighter™ and Primal
Rage,™ but nothing
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game play and visual
power of Battle Beast,™
the ultimate fight game
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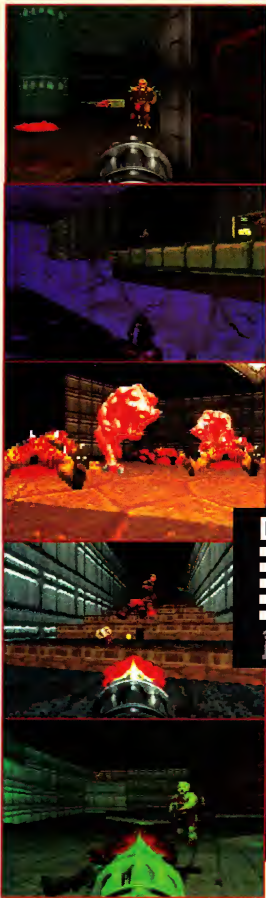
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DOOMED GENERATION



With the estimation that nearly 75 percent of all computers have *Doom* installed, it goes without saying that there's been a lot of anticipation behind the PlayStation port of the title. Sure, the title has shown up on other console systems, but this version promises additional features and even better graphics than the original. And it delivers, too.

Though licensors deemed it necessary to elaborate upon it in the form of a truly vapid novel, the story behind *Doom* is really quite simple. The player acts as some "bad-tude"-filled, jarhead soldier who's Earth's last hope against an invasion from hell. You begin with a pistol and must "scavenge" for additional weapons (from shotgun to the "BFG 9000") while blowing away everything in sight and solving a few

simple puzzles. Though rather basic, there's something quite entertaining about wading through level after level, leaving a trail of demon corpses in your wake. Entertaining enough to make *Doom* one of the most popular games of all time, that is.

The *Doom* PlayStation Custom Edition boasts quite a few advances over its computer cousin, not the least of which is that this version features weapons, enemies and levels culled from both *Doom* and *Doom II*. Veterans will find all the original hidden rooms and features are still in place, as well as impressively enhanced graphics. Not only has spooky ambient lighting been added, but the creature pixilation and graphic scrolling matches that found on only the really beefy computer systems. Also, through the PlayStation's link capability, players can also face off against one another in Deathmatch Mode or act out a buddy-action flic of sorts in Cooperative.

If you've got *Doom* on the brain, this seems like the version to get. Newcomers are sure to enjoy the hell out of it and, at the same time, veterans can appreciate it as well. Let's hope having this impressive of a version will embarrass developers into not making clones for the PlayStation. Cross your fingers. —Phyllis Torquemada

DOOM

- PUBLISHER: Williams Entertainment
- SYSTEM: Sony PlayStation
- THEME: Action/Shooter
- MEGS: N/A
- PLAYERS: 1-2 ■ LEVELS: 50+

12345



STURDY BIRD OF PREY



ir combat titles seem about a dime a dozen these days, making it quite remarkable to find one that sticks out as much as *WarHawk* does. To be brief, it's damn fun.

The game is a little deceiving at first, beginning in a full-motion video introduction like most. Unlike most though, this and later FMV segments work well to integrate the player into the game's story line. Herein, your commanding officer assigns you to suicide mission after suicide mission against Kreeel, an evil warlord intent on taking control of the world by force. Kreeel utilizes the mysterious Red Mercury to run his huge arsenal of ships and weapon-encrusted bases, and the player must help discover the mystery power source's secrets. The first mission requires the player to search out and bring back a canister of Red Mercury, while later missions carry much more aggressive requirements, as one more actively takes the fight to Kreeel.

In many titles, once the player passes a level, running through it again generally feels pretty tedious. *WarHawk*, on the other hand, retains a good amount of play value throughout. Even though the use of board codes makes it unnecessary, running through early missions is entertaining. Cliche or not, getting there is half the fun.

Loaded for bear, *WarHawk* contains a full bevy of impressive features: rich soundtrack, handsome 3-D graphics, excellent gameplay and a fairly compelling story line (enhanced by a different ending nearly every time your ship goes down, including one where Kreeel chokes to death on a chicken bone while laughing at your miserable fate). All combine to make the game just another one of many reasons to own a PlayStation. It's one of the titles that'll be defining next-generation gaming, as well as one the other air-combat titles could well learn from.

—Joe Fielder



WarHawk

- PUBLISHER: Sony Computer Entertainment
- SYSTEM: Sony PlayStation
- THEME: Flight/Adventure
- MEGS: N/A
- PLAYERS: 1 ■ LEVELS: 6

1234i/25

When I find F.J.B.
my balloon will be

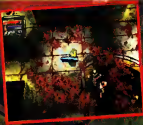
red, he will go
splatt!, and

I'll carve him up
into bite-sized
clunks so I can

feed him to my
fuzzy bear Percy.

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LOADED



15 Enormous
Levels To Explore



3D Morphing Terrain

"Possibly the
hottest title
of the year."

f.w.a.n.k

— Game Players

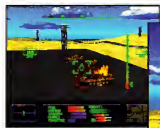


WEAPON OF CHOICE: Neutron Spheres
SUPER WEAPON: Homing Teddies

KILLER TIP: not a speed demon — go in
"blastin'" or else risk getting surrounded.



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FLIES THROUGH THE AIR WITH THE GREATEST OF EASE

Descending in from 5,000 feet for a pinpoint missile strike is as easy as pie with the new *Agile Warrior F-111X* by Virgin Interactive. This is a flight-attack game for the player who likes a bit of complexity in his or her simulations. Not to say the game is overly complicated, but it's definitely more than just a pure shoot-'em-up free-for-all.

Several missions greet the eager pilot, most of which deal with covert government actions in the Middle East or even as far north as Russia. FMV mission briefings prior to the carnage may be viewed or bypassed as wished. The real fun in this game lies within the combat sections of the missions. Several ground targets including tanks, foot soldiers, armored vehicles and the exploding palm trees dot the countryside giving their lives willingly for your killing pleasure. Check the in-flight mission map to find your targets and current mission objectives. Choose your special weapons, be it Sidewinders, Napalm, Mavericks, Rockets or Cluster bombs. In addition to the special weapons, unlimited bullet firepower is available at all

times. Keep an eye on your fuel and shields and you're ready to rumble. Actual combat is quite fun to behold, the main objective is to blow up targets on the ground, but you must keep an eye on the attacking jets and helicopters that surround you. Power-ups are available, free floating above recently deceased targets. Once an objective is destroyed, move on to the next until the mission is cleared.

Only a few things bothered me about the game, one of

which is the rate at which the landscape appears as you get closer to it. At times it seems like there is an ocean in the



Agile Warrior

■ PUBLISHER: Virgin Interactive
■ SYSTEM: Sony PlayStation
■ THEME: Flight/Action
■ MEGS: N/A
■ PLAYERS: 1
■ LEVELS: 7 missions

123 5

distance, but wait, it turns into land! The heavy-metal sound-track bothered me, too. When will game companies realize that pop music today is different than when they were in high school and perhaps kids playing games now might want to hear something from their own era? But all tunces aside, the game is a real winner. —Dean Hager

THEM'S THE BRAKES

Let me say this right up-front. I don't play race games to beat other cars on the track. I play race games to wreak havoc, destroy property and run over the unfortunate bystander. In other words, I play these games like everyone else: as a release for the day-to-day horrors of the real world.

Having said that, I've gotta say that I was really surprised at how much fun I had playing this game.

The game starts with a decision on your part. You must choose a Celica or a Delta, automatic or manual. With that done, the race begins with 14 other cars competing on three increasingly difficult tracks: desert, forest and mountain.

Along each course you must hit timed checkpoints. If the clock counts down before you reach them, you are retired and...game over.

The desert track is the easiest of the courses. Hitting the checkpoints is pretty easy unless it's your first time. This is the point where you learn that you also have a codriver (or navigator) who hollers out road conditions ahead (curves as well as the level of danger). Pay attention and coordinate with his voice.

By the time you get to the mountain course, you not only have to deal with more twists and turns but a town as well. It's rough and more often than not I've found the nose of my car pushed into a wall or the sides of a tunnel.

Variations within the game are pretty fun, including a two-player, split-screen game option. I actually find it more fun racing another tangible person than the vague race cars of the regular game with their undefined locations. There's also a time challenge game that is exactly what it sounds like.

Overall, this is a fun game where one can actually learn from mistakes and eventually get the subtleties of steering and braking down enough to move ahead in the pack. Now if they could only add a teeny bit of off-road destruction I would be in heaven.

—Frank Kurtz



Sega Rally Championship

■ PUBLISHER: Sega **■ SYSTEM:** Sega Saturn
■ THEME: Racing **■ MEGS:** N/A **■ PLAYERS:** 1-2
■ LEVELS: 3

12345

HAVE FUN NO FEAR OF A PLAYER STRIKE!



World Series Baseball on the Saturn will satisfy many an armchair coach with its special features and overall feel. For one thing, from the standpoint of statistics (dear to the heart of any baseball fan), they're all here at least as close as 1994.

All the players from both leagues have been captured on the CD-ROM and one of the game's neatest features is to be able to call up each player in a baseball card-like display.

Beyond the impressive database, there's also some impressive gameplay. If you want, you can choose any team and play against any other team (either controlled by the Saturn or a buddy) in an Exhibition Mode. Or you can set up a Pennant race with a season length of 13, 26 or 162 games. Up to four players can join in a Playoff style of games but our favorite is to simply set up an All-Star game and run the best players from both leagues.

Games can take place in four exactly detailed stadiums (Fenway Park, Astrodome, Wrigley Field and Yankee Stadium) and the

World Series Baseball

- PUBLISHER: Sega
- SYSTEM: Sega Saturn
- THEME: Sports
- MEGS: N/A
- PLAYERS: 1-4
- LEVELS: N/A

12345



game viewpoint can be switched between four different camera angles or even a random choice so on each play you're never sure how you'll see it.

Control is well designed and the gamer will find that it's easy to do everything from bunting, stealing bases and pitching to batting, running and fielding.

Still, it's too bad that the

main batter figure lacks the attention to animation given to other areas of the game. The fellow looks like he's on rails and moves to and away from the box in a very unfluid motion. It's also a shame that no matter who is at bat, it's the same figure. We found that the lack of attention to this one detail hurt the feel of this game and lost it a rating point. But if you want to be taken out to the old ball game—you could do worse than this package! —Neal Shapiro

Butch

"Yee-haw! I'm a
killin' maniac,
AND I LIKE IT!!!"
— Game Players

When I find FJB,
I'm gonna dress
him up in
a hideous day-glow
mini-skirt.

Zoom In & Out Of Action

paint his toes
violet, and
call him "Dolly."
Then I'll
waste him.

Features Music of
Pop Will Eat Itself

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BY GAMERS. FOR GAMERS.™

WEAPON OF CHOICE: Flamethrower
SUPER WEAPON: Explosive Ring
KILLER TIP: Fights best against the ropes.
Back into a corner and mow 'em down.

GREAT APE

Ihile there's an abundance of hype about 32-Bit platforms and next-generation gaming, master Miyamoto has shown once again that it's the software, not the hardware, that makes a great gaming experience. Flat out, DKC 2 is presently the best Nintendo has to offer for the SNES.

Is it better than the original DKC? Ah, yes. Graphically, it's akin to the first in the series, but slightly more interesting with imaginative layered backgrounds, like the oozing honey that rolls unobstructively down the screens of the beehive stage. But the real improvements come in the shape of lead characters Diddy Kong and Dixie Kong, between which there's greater interaction than that enjoyed by the duo in the preceding DKC. To incapacitate Kong-loathing adversaries and reach out-of-the-way places, secret barrels, hidden worlds and bonus coins, the two simians can team up, and throw one another in assorted acrobatic and masochistic fashions.

The other major improvement in DKC 2 is the augmented difficulty in all levels of the game (bonus worlds excluded). While most boards in the original moved at a rollicking pace, the sequel demands longer hours—thus translating into more gameplay. But while increased difficulty can be marked as an improvement, also recognize that some of the boards will frustrate the living bejeezus out of you. Particularly beware of Web Woods. As Squitter the Spider, the player must spin web platforms over the bottomless chasms below. Webs don't last terribly long and the

finesse required to manipulate around flying enemies can stump the best of gamers.

While all boards are amazingly rendered and offer all-new terrains and realms for exploration, many levels do appear awfully familiar; underwater caverns, roller-coaster rides and barrels full of blasting monkeys draw from the gameplay of the original. But a few clever, new tricks, like blowing winds, sticky honeycombs and lots of TNT, provide Diddy and Dixie with additional challenges.

Cranky is back for the sequel, but this time around he charges for tips, as does Wrinkly Kong (Kong's mother) Swanky Kong (the Armani monkey-suited game-show host) and Funky Kong (the high-flying monkey pilot).

Hidden boards are plentiful, as are bananas and a new series of minted coinage. DK bonus coins improve Diddy's hero status and are hidden on each and every board; Kremkoins are necessary for crossing the overtestosteroned Klubba's toll bridge (which leads to an entirely separate secret world) and banana bunch coins can be used to purchase information and the like from itchy-fingered, money-grubbing family

Donkey Kong Country 2

- PUBLISHER: Nintendo
- SYSTEM: Nintendo
- THEME: Action
- PLAYERS: 1-2
- MEGS: N/A
- LEVELS: 6

12341/25

members. And of course, all-new enemies and animal friends have been introduced: amiable snakes, spiders and angel fish included.

Donkey Kong Country 2 is a fun ride, despite its close resemblance to DKC. It's near perfect entertainment, despite Diddy's and Dixie's annoying board-clearing rock solos.

—Rob Bernstein





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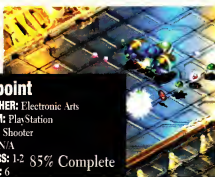
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HAPPINESS IS A WARM GUN

Viewpoint for the Neo•Geo clearly surprised quite a few people, and it was a pleasant surprise at that. The title had nice

graphics, not to mention solid gameplay. Now, EA has upgraded the title, using SGI-rendered artwork to create an even more 3-D feel.

Players must navigate through six levels of Zaxxon-like perspective play. Your ship begins with a basic shooter (which can be held for a charge), but add-ons can be picked up to make your gear more formidable. Three types of smart bombs help



Viewpoint

- PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts
- SYSTEM: PlayStation
- THEME: Shooter
- MEGS: N/A
- PLAYERS: 1-2 85% Complete
- LEVELS: 6

the player keep the screen clean, but should be used only when things get hairy since replacements are sparse.

Each level has a radically different background and a variety of 3-D-

rendered creatures that are beautiful, quick and fully ready to give you their own personal version of tough love. After piloting through areas rife with blaster fire and bulky, swinging obstacles, players are rewarded with end Bosses that are armed to the gills and about as mobile as yourself.

To make this a little easier on players, EA has added a password function making it possible to start up in several spots through each level. Quite welcome, as even the "easy" in "Easy Mode" is a relative term. Either way, this title was considered one of the better shooters even before the PlayStation came along. And now, it looks even better.

—Steven Garrett

ASLEEP AT THE TREAD

Imagine jumping behind the controls of one of the cyber tanks from the '80s film *Tron* and you've got the general feel of *Assault Rigs*. One big exception though: Your controls respond like they've been prescribed a healthy dose of Percodan.

Assault Rigs finds the player controlling a computer-generated mech in a futuristic cyberspace arena. One must collect various items while fending off opponents to move on through level after level of increasingly difficult areas. While this first-person tank joyride is admittedly graphically impressive, the gameplay is lacking.

Navigating around through the various arenas is a tedious process, and dodging enemy fire is even more frustrating. For the most part, players can only watch as enemy fire launches toward you—and when you die, you must annoyingly resume at the beginning of the level. Only the fastest of the three tank speeds available has a chance of avoiding them. In some instances, changing the perspective of the screen

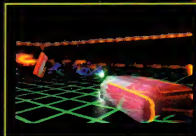
to a bird's-eye view (of the five provided) will alert you to enemies hidden around the corner before they blast away at you, but who cares? Then there aren't any

surprises at all.

Two-player variations are provided as well, such as Gem War

(where opponents race to collect the most gems and exit the screen) and Rig Rumble (where players face off).

All in all, *Assault Rigs* tries to keep its players interested, but the basic gameplay falls too short



from the get-go. This is the first title I've seen for the PlayStation that didn't demand my attention and keep it. I'm afraid that if the future is this dull, there's just no future in it. —Phyllis Torquemada

Assault Rigs

- PUBLISHER: Papyrus
- SYSTEM: Saturn
- THEME: Action
- MEGS: N/A
- PLAYERS: 1-2
- LEVELS: 42

12345

sporting goods

Sports simulations can be heavy into statistics, or they can stress playability, or they can feature fine animation—but the very few great sports games accomplish all of this at once. *FIFA Soccer '96* is such a rare, great sports game!

Just about every country in the world with a soccer team is represented in one of the cart's leagues—down to the individual players on each team.

Every team is rated in key areas as to performance. So if you want to set up a game between yourself and a friend or a couple of friends or the computer it's very simple to decide amongst the wealth of teams.

Up to four people (using Sega's 4-Way Play adapter) can each control (two per team) the on-screen players. Controlled players run atop a colored star and control can be rapidly shifted from one on-screen player to the next.

Kicking, passing, all the defensive and offensive soccer moves are easily controlled although there are so many different options the

Practice Mode will surely come in handy. The animated players, although small, are excellent as they run in almost roto-scoped motion and design. Turn on injuries and watch an unlucky few fall in leg-twitching, pixelated anguish to the field!

Games can last various lengths as halves can be set to be from two to 45 minutes in duration. The true soccer nut can even play full-length league tournaments—and be extra thankful for the cart's save feature; you're going to need it.



FIFA Soccer '96

- PUBLISHER: Sega
- SYSTEM: Genesis
- THEME: Sports
- MEGS: N/A
- PLAYERS: 1-4
- LEVELS: N/A

12345

If you enjoy sports games on your Genesis, it just doesn't get better than this soccer extravaganza.

—Charles Mitford

a mad it's SIDE-SCROLLING WORLD

Yoshi's *Island* features a palette of colors that gives new meaning to the word pastel. These are eye-dazzling, mind-warping pastels that lend an air of impressionism to what might have been run-of-the mill graphics. Okay, maybe it's not like Vincent Van Gogh designed the game (but given that he never sold a painting in his life, I bet he would have jumped at the chance) but graphics add to the involvement of any game—and this is one involving game.

Baby Mario (infant plumber extraordinaire) has been kidnapped and luckily dropped onto Yoshi Island where all the residents join forces to carry him back to his parents. Any Mario fan will recall Yoshi: the little dragon with the big heart, long tongue and high cuteness quotient. Well, not only is he back, he's probably the best and most reliable sitter on the whole island.

Here we have a relay race of running the

Mario Baby through various challenging stages atop Yoshi. Most of the stages are side-scrolling with some vertical ones and all are platform-jumping as would befit the Mario universe.

At the end of each stage, Baby Mario gets passed to a new, differently colored Yoshi.

Don't mess with any of these Yoshis as they all suck in enemies, turn them into eggs and spit 'em out. The control to do this is superb and this is one of the easiest games to learn and use that we've seen in a while. The levels are full of challenges that are difficult and intense without suddenly topping out into impossible.

About the only thing I could find to criticize in this game was the lack of detail in most of the Bosses and larger critters. In this case the minimalist graphics might be a shade too minimal. But, hey, if you like Mario games feel free to give it that last half a star.

—Neal Shapiro

Super Mario World 2: Yoshi's Island

- PUBLISHER: Nintendo of America, Inc.
- SYSTEM: SNES
- THEME: Action
- MEGS: N/A
- PLAYERS: 1
- LEVELS: 48

1234 1/2 5





does whatever VECTOR can



Vectorman on the Sega features very little, if anything, that hasn't been seen many times before—but that's not necessarily a putdown. The animation of the main figure in this usually side-scrolling (a few perspective changes here and there) platform jumper is fresh, fluid and it's the kind of game that a person who enjoys shooters may play over and over.

Vectorman is made up of 23 spheres that can shift and transform him (if you find the right power-up) into such things as a fish or a drill or even an exploding bomb. The actual morphing from one shape to the other happens with a neat fool-the-eye quickness that makes it fun to learn the new ways of moving Vman and not just a gimmick.

Garbage in, garbage out may be a motto of computing, but Vman is only concerned with garbage out as he fights other garbage-robots gone mad on his mission to clean up Earth for when the humans get home. Well, that's the scenario. One disappointment was that Vman never (in the levels we saw) actually collects garbage, he just fights the meanies.

Oh, and there's \$160,000 in prizes if you beat Vectorman and get a special screen at the end. There's even 90 Sega Saturns being given away—odds of winning one is one in 5,722, according to the info sheet. So, maybe you should write a request to Old St. Nick anyway.

Vectorman is fun although not groundbreaking—but fun ain't half bad!

—Neal Shapiro

Vectorman

- PUBLISHER: Sega
- SYSTEM: Genesis
- THEME: Action
- MEGS: 16
- PLAYERS: 1
- LEVELS: N/A

123 1/2 45



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Available on PC CD-ROM (DOS and Windows 95™ compatible). Check out *Rebel Assault II* at LucasArts web site: <http://www.lucasarts.com>

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VIRTUAL BRAINER



Inspired by the popular kid's action television series, this game is a real disappointment and perhaps a sure sign of the decline of the 16-Bit Sega format in favor of new (i.e., more expensive, higher res) formats.

The idea is entirely basic: The player is given the choice of picking one of three heroes from the 'TV' series. Each of the heroes' designs are significantly simplified from what is seen on TV, no doubt due to the complicated details of the originals. Even the villains in the game look simplified, giving an overall generic feel to the entire proceedings.

All there is to the game is fighting, without even the ability to pick your foes like in *Mortal Kombat*. Each foe comes up in all his mediocrity and you beat the crap out of him. Then you have a quick round where you beat the crap out of a slew of the big bad guy's minions.

This repeats almost into infinity.

The simplicity of the game is relentless. Often, you can simply keep your character hopping around without even hitting your opponent and when the clock eventually runs out, you'll win. It's as simple as that. Sure, there are a few special moves that allow you to trash your enemy, but who cares? When you can win by doing nothing, what's the point anyway? Okay, maybe the game even with its B-grade gore is intended for kids. Most of the kids I know would be through this thing within half an hour and then beg for another game. My suggestion is to look elsewhere first.

—Frank Kurtz

V.R. Troopers

- PUBLISHER: Sega
- SYSTEM: Genesis
- THEME: Fighting
- MEGS: 16
- PLAYERS: 1-2
- LEVELS: N/A

12345

the WHOLE TRUTH

It used to be that a golfer was expected to carry a bag of heavy clubs around the course, but then they invented the caddy, and following that the golf cart, and now PGA Tour '96 and your Genesis combine to make the golfing experience easier than ever before.

You don't even have to worry about putting together a foursome. The computer will set up a match or skins game for you and fill in for opponents or a partner with any of the top 10 pros on the tour. Heck, tee time isn't even a worry.

Play can commence on three superbly drawn and well-known golf courses—River Highlands, Sawgrass or Spyglass Hill. It may be an illusion but every tree and shrub looks to be in place, not to mention every hole, green, sand trap, water hazard and tee.

Practice, as in the real game, is the key to performance. Keeping your back straight, your arm extended and your eye on the ball may not help here, though.

Rather, the player will need to hone joystick reflexes to click at just the right portion of the backswing to impart exactly the right impetus to the ball while allowing for the wind. Some shots such as using a pitching wedge reminded this golfer very much of the feel of the real game. The putting is realistic also and you can even read the green via onscreen grids.

The only downside is the speed with which the graphics are updated. This will probably only bother those who have seen the PC version of this game on a 486 100 MHz computer but it's pretty obvious the old Cenny is using all its silicon brain cells on this cart. But if you want to golf on a 16-Bit video game console and don't have a big ol' multimedia computer handy, then PGA Tour '96 is a clubhouse treat. —Neal Shapiro



PGA Tour '96

- PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts
- SYSTEM: Genesis
- THEME: Sports
- MEGS: 16
- PLAYERS: 1-2
- LEVELS: N/A

123 1/2 45

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missiletag

Admit it. You've got a 3DO and lately you've been looking at those PlayStation titles and their slick 3-D graphics with envy. Envy no more. Games like *Battlesport* transcend trendy technology.

Make no mistake, *Battlesport* delivers plenty of engaging 3-D visuals. But, more importantly, it delivers where it counts: in addictive gameplay.

You are a competitor in the sport of the future, where armored "sleds" trade laser fire in a huge arena. But unlike

earlier genre titles, which focused on racing, *Battlesport* borrows from football and basketball. You scramble around the obstacle-laden arena for a floating ball. Get the ball and shoot it at the goal.

The only problem is your rival is trying to do the same thing—and instead of 300-pound linemen,



Battlesport

■ PUBLISHER: Cyclone Studios
■ SYSTEM: 3DO
■ THEME: Action
■ MEGS: N/A
■ PLAYERS: 1-2
■ LEVELS: 50

12345



he's hurling missiles.

Battlesport succeeds by offering a nearly mind-numbing array of variables. To begin with, the goals of the future don't stand around—and neither do the balls! In Pregame you can choose from a number of different ship types, each with different advantages and trade-offs. Once you've decided on a sled you can equip it with

30 different attachments, from more powerful lasers to a device that literally draws the ball toward your ship.

Battlesport offers five different computer-controlled competitors, but where it really shines is head to head. The split-screen action is fast paced and should get you and a friend shouting.

—David Gerding

CARTOON CALAMITY

He runs, he shoots...he induces nausea.

Captain Quazar is a shooter in the style of the old *Contra* arcade games. You get a handful of weapons and traverse the landscape blowing up everything in sight. Unfortunately, *Quazar* doesn't do enough to update this well-worn style of play.

You assume the role of Captain Quazar, a Dudley Do-Right look-alike with pea-sized intelligence and a superhero grin straight out of *The Tick*. It is the cartoonish quality that is immediately off-putting. While a cartoon look and feel work for *Earthworm Jim* and *Rayman*, they fail here.

To its credit, *Quazar* tries to

offer improved gameplay. For example, there are a number of puzzles or obstacles on each level, such as prisoners that must be interrogated, resulting in pass codes and the like.

Rather than accentuate the game, these little puzzles merely succeed in accentuating the limited depth of play. The game also suffers from astonishingly poor controls. Much of the learning curve of the game involves learning to compensate

for these abysmal controls. Much of the time your character will be shooting wildly as you struggle to figure out how to hit the onscreen character standing within feet of him.

Perhaps the most unusual trouble is its Two-player Mode. In theory neither player can leave the screen, so they move together. In actuality, one character can vanish off the edge, leaving the two players to struggle for screen control.

To adapt the politically correct lingo of the '90s, *Captain Quazar* is design

...challenged. In other words, from what I've seen so far, look elsewhere.

—David Joseph

Captain Quazar

■ PUBLISHER: Cyclone Studios
■ SYSTEM: 3DO
■ THEME: Action
■ MEGS: 16
■ PLAYERS: 1-2
■ LEVELS: 10

70% Complete



EVERYBODY MUST STONED

The *Stonekeep* development team has conquered a more lethal enemy than any of the monsters who populate its *Stonekeep* fantasy role-playing game. Book and movie ads sometimes brag about how long they take to complete, but

software publishers avoid such claims like the plague. Usually, that's the last thing they want to tell prospective buyers, who know that time ravages interactive electronic entertainment products.

Too many games, like *The 11th Hour*, suffer from not reaching gamers while the concepts and technology are still fresh. Not many titles survive a multiyear delay intact. Things move fast in the digital world, and even the best games of two years ago are strictly middle-of-the-pack today.

Stonekeep escapes this temporal trap. The tools and technology used to present it didn't

exist when Interplay founder Brian Fargo launched the long development process in the late 1980s.

Though it sounds like shooting for a landing on the moon before anyone invents the rocket, this time

it works. The planetary gods of the *Stonekeep* mythos must have been smiling. Whenever development bogged down, like the attempt to rotoscope live actors for use as characters and monsters, they discovered something like BetaCam, that allowed them to achieve the desired effect.

Producer Mike Quarles' crew offers an exciting quest that doesn't concede much to rival RPG releases. The biggest disappointment is that *Stonekeep* doesn't install well under Windows 95. Setup for an Aptiva was long and cumbersome for a game that emphasizes ease of use and intuitive feel.

The exceptional full-screen graphics are a triumph. Digitized video of live actors laid against intricately detailed backgrounds gives this interactive dark fantasy a level of realism denied games that show everything with

animated illustration.

The audio is even more impressive than the video. Professional actors recite over 2,000 lines of dialogue. Subtitles confirm spoken comments, if desired. Written messages may be handy, especially for characters with particularly low and rumbling voices, but the on-screen printing detracts from the ambience. Separately adjustable music and sound lend solidity to the images.

The interface couldn't be more understandable or straightforward. The arrow keys smoothly control

movement, and each mouse button directs one of Drake's hands. The shape of the intelligent cursor changes to show what actions are possible in any given situation.

Stonekeep has lots of challenging situations and subgoals, such as liberating a dragon, but it has few of those long boring puzzles that alienate casual players. It's a good antidote to the idiosyncratic complexities that pass for depth in some supposedly advanced adventures.

—Amie Katz



Stonekeep

■ PUBLISHER:

Interplay

■ SYSTEM: IBM

■ THEME: RPG

■ MEGS: 8

■ PLAYERS: 1

■ LEVELS: N/A

12345



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REPENT!

In the never-ending march of software looking to ride the coattails of *Doom*, *Heretic* always had the advantage of blood relation. *Heretic* wasn't done by the exact same id Software team that did *Doom*, but plenty of the same hands touched the mold. Now *Hexen*, the sequel to *Heretic*, enters the fray swinging an enhanced engine, lush frills and dense replayability.

For the unenlightened: *Hexen* is a first-person perspective immersive environment, replete with eerie atmosphere, unusual settings, implacable foes; deplete with transcendent plot, moving story line, non-physical puzzles. It's a series of fantastic playgrounds where the mighty trade powerful blows with vicious monsters and each other, where the only goal is survival and doing unto others before they do unto you. It's a pretty game, loud and deep, with more than enough action to keep your twitch impulses engaged for hours on end.

For people who played and loved *Doom*, *Hexen* is a worthy addition to this series of games, mostly for the new things it tries and achieves. Gone is the relentless linearity of *Doom*; *Hexen* actually features levels that you return to, time and time again. Instead of linear levels, *Hexen* consists of discrete sections separated by Ethereal Travel portals; actions like flipping levers can and will have an effect on other levels.

The biggest new toy, though, is character classes. You play as a warrior, a cleric or a mage. Each has different capabilities, strengths and weaponry. For example, the warrior is unsurprisingly brawny, giving large amounts of damage while taking the same. The mage is scrawny but powerful at a distance. The cleric sits betwixt the two, happily average at all endeavors.

The biggest brilliance in the game is its balancing between these classes. The warrior has no distance attacks; the mage, no hand-to-hand attacks. The four basic weapons of each class operate in distinct fashions from each other, while still adhering to the same game flow. This, while novel, is not brilliant. What is brilliant is the fact that items in the game have a different effect for each class. The Flechette potion, for example, acts as a close-range mine for the mage, a poison gas generator for the cleric and as a hurled grenade for the warrior. Even better, the mix of monsters changes also, presenting more with capabilities for the classes best able to handle them.

The driving idea behind *Hexen*'s advances is the presentation of a more dynamic environment: leaves blow off trees, glass shatters, platforms move randomly rather than with mechanical precision. Most important, though, is the move to a primarily hand-to-hand combat ethic. Instead of the long-range duels common to *Doom*, players weave and lunge with axe and mace. This more than anything else signals the imminent presence of *Quake*, which is likely to utilize such an ethic.

Bottom line? It's a good piece of work. The classes redefine replayability, and the advances to the engine are impressive and welcome. It doesn't equal *Doom II* for me, but I'm not sure anything ever will.

—Kevin Perry

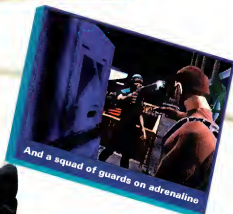


Hexen

- PUBLISHER: id Software
- SYSTEM: DOS CD-ROM
- THEME: Action
- MEGS: 25
- PLAYERS: 1
- LEVELS: N/A

123i/245

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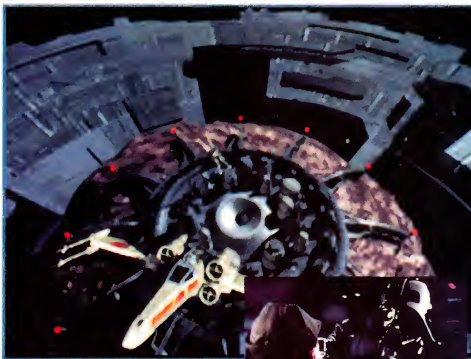
REBEL RAII

LucasArts' *Rebel Assault II*, like Trilobyte's *The 11th Hour*, are setting disturbing trends for computer-game players. These titles are upgrading their original concepts designed for their highly successful first runs into games devoid of new, innovative concepts. Unlike *The 11th Hour*, *Rebel Assault II* shows nothing new in terms of gameplay.

Minor complaints were raised against *Rebel Assault* about some areas of the game being too difficult, while some players were aggravated by the inability to save game progress to disc. Public-domain difficulty editors and cheats were circulated to overcome the first of these problems. The second one, well friends, that's what *Rebel Assault II* gives us.

In addition to the ability to save pilot game status, *Rebel Assault II* also beat the game hackers to the punch by including a game difficulty editor, similar to the public domain editor created for its predecessor. The editor allows the modification of all the important game parameters such as scoring, target and player damage values, movement control parameters and so on. Using this utility, players can modify game parameters to complete the game with an outrageously high score in less than 20 minutes.

What's good about *RAII*? For one thing, the graphics and video sequences once again set a standard for software-only, full-screen video playback on a PC. The playback technology isn't as advanced or as impressive as *The 11th Hour*'s, but *RAII*'s quality comes close. This game is all about eye candy, and *RAII* succeeds on all levels here. The video sequences, especially the Asteroid Field, Star Destroyer and non-interactive FMV playbacks, possess a



level of detail that could qualify them for inclusion into the next *Star Wars* film due sometime in '97. Until the next sequel to this master franchise property is released on celluloid, products like *RAII* will keep the visual excitement of the *Star Wars* saga alive.

The other addition made to *RAII* was the ability to pilot (I state this term loosely, because just as was the case in *Rebel Assault*, all paths of each game sequence are predetermined and cannot be altered) a range of *Star Wars*-created vehicles. These include a B-Wing, X-Wing, Y-Wing, Speeder Bike, TIE Fighter, the Millennium Falcon and the

Empire's new secret weapon, a Phantom TIE Fighter. This last ship is the basis for the story line in *RAII*, which is so stale and predictable that one can only hope that the next *Star Wars* film doesn't borrow from any of the cliches used in this game. There are also first- and third-person perspective contests, but unlike *Doom* and *Dark Forces*, the paths are set and predetermined, just like the rest of the arcade

sequences in *RAII*.

In summary, besides the graphics and difficulty editor, there is nothing new for game players in *Rebel Assault II*. Hopefully the game-buying public will demand more than a rehash of the same old tired concepts dressed up with attractive graphics.

—Mike Riley

Rebel Assault II

■ PUBLISHER: LucasArts

■ SYSTEM: IBM

■ SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS: 50 MHz 486, Doublespeed, MPC Level 2 CD-ROM drive, 8 MB RAM, VGA (VESA-compliant Super VGA recommended), 16-Bit sound card recommended.

■ THEME: Action

■ PLAYERS: 1

■ LEVELS: 15 Chapters

12345



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BURNING DOWN THE HOUSE

The year was 1992. The month was January. The place was Las Vegas. The event was the Winter Consumer Electronics Show. The title being shown publicly for the first time that captured the public imagination, including that of Mr. Microsoft himself, was an incredible, high-resolution, 12 fps, real-time playback game from a new, small software development company named Trilobyte. The game was *The 7th Guest*. A year or so later, the title had been released to the public and gave computer owners a reason to buy a CD-ROM drive. The title became such a strong incentive to purchase a multimedia kit that it became a default bundled package in many MPC upgrades.

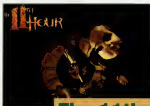
The 11th Hour begins at *The 7th Guest* location 80 years later. This time, you personify smug television reporter Carl Denning. Seems that your lover and co-worker, Robin Morales, has disappeared after investigating Stauf's house. Upon receiving what looks like an HP palmbook from a ding-dong ditcher, you open it up to find it possessed with a more powerful capability than any other palmbook computer on the market—the ability to play 24-Bit, color, 30 frame-per-second, full-motion video clips in stereo, and provide maps, game tips and even a place to load and save games. After receiving this cool gift from a stranger, Robin reveals that she's in trouble at the Stauf mansion and needs your help to escape. The game decides



for you that you should go off to rescue the lady fair. Hey, if that were me, I'd take the palmtop to my techno-buddies and show it off before going off alone to a spooky old house. I'd also visit the house in broad daylight. Oh, and I'd probably bring a few weapons and a S.W.A.T. team with me, just to be thorough.

But like the preset replay paths moving you from room to room in the mansion, you have no choice about these things—so just go along for the ride.

You're back in the Stauf mansion. If you played the first game, you'll recognize its most prominent feature immediately—the staircase. Unlike the grand staircase of the Titanic



The 11th Hour

- **DEVELOPER:** Trilobyte, Inc.
- **PUBLISHER:** Virgin Interactive Entertainment
- **SYSTEM:** PC DOS
- **THEME:** Sports
- **MEGS:** 2
- **PLAYERS:** 1
- **LEVELS:** N.A.
- **REQUIREMENTS:** 486/66 (P.99) recommended, 5MB RAM, Local Bus VESA video card (2MB PCI VESA recommended), 2X CD-ROM, Sound Card w/PCM (16-Bit General MIDI compatible card recommended).

12 1/2 345





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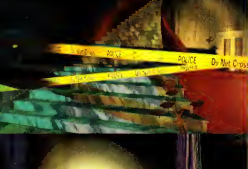


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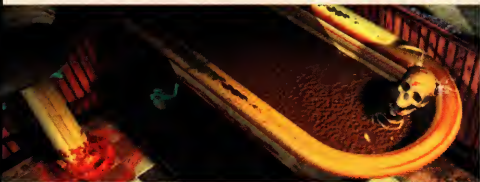
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FUSIONREVIEWS



that rotted away after 80 years of salt water submersion, the Stauf staircase has remained relatively intact. But the rest of the house is a real mess. *The 7th Guest* veterans will be entertained by this visual treat, rummaging through the now-dilapidated home. The graphics pay homage to the exquisitely designed

the video playback of the movie made a fuller story with richer character development technically possible. And while the acting was considerably better in this sequel, the quality of talent and editing were marginal at best. This is a shame. Chris Roberts and his Origin gang proved with *Wing Commander III* and *IV* that by



rooms of the first game by vandalizing them in this updated sequel. Of all the new features found in *The 11th Hour*, I found the artistic interpretation of these premises the most entertaining.

But stunning computer graphic art and cool technical programming tricks by themselves do not a game make. So, like its predecessor, *The 11th Hour* justifies its gaming existence by peppering the fixed traveling trajectories with 19 devious, intelligently

employing decent actors and film editors for the job, the result is an equally decent performance. By the looks of *The 11th Hour*'s cast and crew, the Tribbyte guys spent boatloads more money on their graphics and rendering tools than their onscreen talent. Watching some of the scenes brought a smile to my face—not because they were intended to be humorous, but because of the heckling comeback lines I could hear in my mind from the

"...I'd probably bring a few weapons and a S.W.A.T. team with me, just to be thorough."


designed and challenging puzzles and AI-based games. Like *The 7th Guest*, players must solve these puzzles before they are granted access to more rooms. The static backgrounds are now populated with graphic hotspots in the form of treasure hunt objects. So even though you cannot manipulate any of the items in the house (a common complaint of *The 7th Guest* advocates), there is at least a purpose to some of the more compelling images. Unfortunately for me, it fell back into the same old adventure routine of hunt for the hotspots. To summarize the game's progress, solve a puzzle and gain access to a new room. Find the object and see a few more minutes of the segmented video movie.

In regard to the story, I found it hokey but tolerable and it held my interest long enough to want to see an ending. It was by far a better story than the skeleton sketch of *The 7th Guest*, but that's mostly because

Mystery Science Theater 3000 gang if they ever got a hold of this movie (which, by the way, you can view in its entirety upon the completion of the game if you so desire).

In closing, *The 11th Hour* delivers on its promise of technical superiority above any software-based full-screen, full-motion video entertainment product on the market today. For *The 7th Guest* players, it's more of the same with the twist of new contemporary, yet sentimental graphic renditions of the old Stauf mansion combined with immovable hotspot objects that provide the glue to giving Groovie a reason to exist in a gaming environment. Even though all this software wizardry may be for naught when hardware-based MPEG decoders are standard chips on future PC motherboards, *The 11th Hour* will remain the title that once again proved better, advanced, cool technology will sell games first—gameplay will follow.

—Mike Riley



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LOVING NAPALM IN THE THE SMELL OF MORNING

People who tell you that you can only get good action games on a video-game platform haven't played *Crusader*. Origin's latest is a high-octane shooter with a three-quarter, top-down view of the action. And there is plenty of action to see. *Crusader* delivers careening bullets, rolling barrels, and delicious explosions, all in much higher resolution than you can get on a TV screen. It's further proof that not every game has to look like *Doom*.

The story places you in the role of a former assassin who has turned against the oppressive global corporate government to work for the resistance. The rebel leader assigns you

missions and you spend your time sneaking or blasting your way through corporate offices, research labs and assembly lines, taking out everything you can along the way.

A generous selection of weapons and ordinance are available back at the rebel base. You need credits to outfit yourself though, and these you get from the bodies of your enemies. As the missions progress, it takes more and more strategy rather than simple firepower to survive. Your onscreen persona can do more than run and shoot. Body rolls, jumping and kneeling add to the realism and are required to survive later.

Be warned. *Crusader* is violent with a capital V—as in innocent

bystanders that crumple to the ground, depositing large pools of blood when hit by a stray bullet. It's Senator-agitating fun, and best yet, its subtitle suggests this is the first in a series. This is a good thing; *Crusader* pretty much kicks ass.

—David Gerding

Crusader

- PUBLISHER: Origin/EA
- SYSTEM: DOS CD-ROM
- THEME: Action
- MECS: 30
- PLAYERS: 1
- LEVELS: 15

12345

It Isn't in the CARDS

Some products make you want to cry. When bad implementation hideously damages a really original idea, it becomes that much harder for anyone else to do a new thing in the same vein. *Virtual Tarot* could single-handedly cripple meditation/divination titles for years to come.

First, the idea is a natural. Tarot reading generally engenders very little dispute compared to some other techniques. Since it encompasses basic human archetypes recognized by everything from dramatics to psychology, even skeptics can interpret the tarot as a good tool for meditating and trying to find new combinations in a problem: no fortune telling or supernatural required.

Virtual Tarot provides a great service in giving a visual and auditory database

of the dozens of different card interpretations that stop the average person from ever being able to work effectively with the tarot. VT also automatically performs layouts, allowing the user to concentrate on just the cards and their relationships without having to mess with books to play with this interesting tool.

But the good points are destroyed by an inept implementation. First, it covers the need to install Quicktime, but doesn't bother to check for a more up-to-date version already installed: three lines of code for a competent programmer. Next, in minimum install, the program can't find some files and demands users find them every time the program runs. The list of blunders is almost endless.

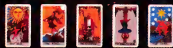
Without some serious attention to detail in other products, the future of Virtual Media Works is clearly in the

cards, the Hermit ill-dignified to be specific: isolation, draining, failure.

—John P. Withers



VIRTUAL TAROT



Virtual Tarot

- PUBLISHER: Virtual Media Works
- SYSTEM: PC, Windows/Mac
- THEME: Esoteric
- MECS: 17
- PLAYERS: 1
- LEVELS: N/A

11/2345

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MOVIN' ON UP

Space Empire fans better put in for some vacation, send the family to Disney World, lock the doors and get to know your pizza delivery man by his first name. *Ascendancy* is here and it is the most addictive, obsessive-compulsive game in the genre since *Masters of Orion*.

Ascendancy is an unbelievably complex game, but to envision it in a nutshell, think of MOO fused with *SimCity*. You start on one planet and must climb up a technological/research ladder to be able to build effective ships and go out to colonize and ultimately conquer the rest of the galaxy.



Ascendancy

- PUBLISHER: Magic Era (out)
- SYSTEM: PC DOS
- THEME: Space Empire
- MEGS: 15
- PLAYERS: 1
- LEVELS: N/A

12341/25



On the *SimCity* side, *Ascendancy* shows each planet as a number of developable zones. The player has a wealth of different structures that can be built on the planet. The exact mix of structures determines the population, production rates and research potential of a given planet.

On a grander scale, planetary systems are linked by hyperspace points called "star lanes." The star lanes restrict the potential spread of a race to predetermined paths, some of which are faster to travel than others. This lends a much more strategic spin to the Space Empire simulation.

The maps, like all the graphics in the game, are a tour de force and lend a great deal of realism to the playing experience. *Ascendancy* does have a few flaws. Minor bugs in the code cause some of the higher-level ship options to perform less than advertised and ships lose power when they shouldn't. But these flaws are only minor and don't prevent it from being a must-buy stocking stuffer for any Space Empire fan. —John P. Withers



strum this way

It's a great concept: Play along with the radio in your own room. When you get good enough, join a garage band. Next comes a gig in the blues club, and eventually, if you play well, join Aerosmith in concert.

So you can't play a note, it's no problem. The great interface gets music even out of a ham-handed video gamer. The two-disc program comes with the VR Pick, a plastic guitar pick-shaped device that plugs in through the printer port. Strum the VR Pick against a rough surface. (The instructions suggest a tennis racket is just about perfect, but tapping the pick on a desktop works well.)

It's a matter of rhythm. A monitor running across the bottom of the screen indicates when to strum. If you match this, a song score racks up points. Band members pop up periodically with feedback on the performance. "Needs work" is about as rough as the criticism gets, but they're fulsome with their praise.

There are three skill settings, ranging from beginner to virtuoso, and four styles: basic, rhythm, lead and stunt. Each has progressively more difficult riffs to match. The soundtrack provides the virtuosity, and all the player has to

produce is the beat. This is, however, harder than it sounds, and most players will come away with a renewed appreciation for Aerosmith.

Virtual Music Entertainment did a slick job on this. The setup is a computer duffer's dream, automated and self-testing. The on-screen rhythm EKG provides a clear visualization of the rhythm. Even a tone-deaf, 10-thumbed no-talent can have fun with the fantasy.

This is a great idea. It scratches the rock 'n' roll itch, has a great soundtrack and is a lot of fun to play around with. The VR Pick is kind of cheesy, but does the job and saves wear on a mouse.

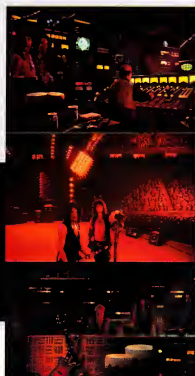
It's surprisingly difficult to master the virtual guitar. Fortunately, it's enough fun that even at the low levels, would-be rockers won't get too bummed out. Rock on, Garth!

—Joyce Worley

Quest for Fame

- PUBLISHER: IBM
- SYSTEM: PC CD-ROM
- THEME: Adventure
- MEGS: 8
- PLAYERS: 1
- LEVELS: N/A

12341/25





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FUSIONREVIEWS

FEAR OF A RED PLANET

It's a shame to see a science-fiction masterpiece reduced to a series of puzzles. The great mystery of *The Martian Chronicles* should not be expressed by murky and inexplicable difficulties. Unfortunately, the designers lost the novel in their pursuit of the game.

But the mystery of Mars is still here, if you can wade through the awkwardness of the interface. The explorer gets little help from the authorities who direct the mission. It's an effort to figure out even simple problems, such as equipping for the trip and opening the transporter. There seems little reason why any explorer would have to struggle with human-made devices. It is, on the other hand, understandable that the Martian devices are inoperable without a lot of trial and effort.

Alienness suffuses the landscape, buildings and objects left behind by the missing Martians, and this is enhanced by the strange, haunting music score.

The game itself is a long struggle to find and interpret the remnants of the culture and to unravel the mystery of what happened to previous missions. The human structures left behind are

telepathic images still exist, even though the inhabitants appear to be gone, or at least well hidden. Ghosts, sounds and vehicles are sometimes seen, as are members of some of the original Earth/Mars crews. None are very helpful, except to provide a wonderful atmospheric Martian background to the game's endless puzzles.

The art style is evocative, with cascading colors that form a kaleidoscopic background for the unusual sightings of the missing culture.

In the end, the player may find the Martians, just as the reader located them in the novel, but the search is long and hard. This is a great adventure for the puzzle-minded, but if you're looking for the wonder of Bradbury's novel, I suggest you read the book. —Joyce Worley

Ray Bradbury's The Martian Chronicles Adventure Game

- PUBLISHER: Byron Preiss
- SYSTEM: PC CD & Mac CD
- THEME: Sci-Fi Adventure
- MEGS: 8
- PLAYERS: 1
- LEVELS: N/A

12345

almost as baffling as the alien artifacts, but the gamer has a few tools to help. Martian



JACKS & BETTER

The same sensibility that makes Berkeley's screen savers like *Totally Twisted* so popular infuses this TV-style trivia quiz.

In other words, it's funny, clever—and about as deep as a mirror. *You Don't Know Jack* isn't a severe test by the

When launched, the program swings into Preshow Mode. The screen is nearly blank, but the crosstalk among show staffers is full of juicy, dangling comments guaranteed

lead-in, one to three factmeisters compete in a seven- or 21-question round. The seven-question version takes 10 minutes, even with three players.

The graphics consist of animated type, like a game board rather than a detailed rendering of a quiz-show set with contestants, a moderator and models. The audio is more sophisticated. The host comments on every right or wrong answer, a chorus sings an intro to each question and music fills in the dead spots.

Most questions are multiple choice, but there are other types to add variety. The best are the gibberish questions, in which players try to figure out a saying that sounds like the one onscreen.

No one thought much about command control for this title. Three players hunkered over the same keyboard is too crowded for comfort. Solitaire play avoids the logjam, but at the cost of competitive intensity.

You Don't Know Jack is long on cute, but short on staying power. It's an entertaining

If Carol Brady were a pig, what is the greatest number of people she could suckle on her sow teats?

Marcia, Jan and Cindy
Marcia, Jan, Cindy, Peter and Bobby
all six Brady kids
all six kids plus all the Partridge family kids

Frank
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standards of *Jeopardy*, but the fast and funny questions and wise-ass ambience are an enjoyable time-waster.

to fire the imagination of anyone who ever eavesdropped on the neighboring table at a restaurant.

After a Pregame Option

You Don't Know Jack

- PUBLISHER: Berkley Systems
- SYSTEM: Mac
- THEME: Quiz
- MEGS: 5
- PLAYERS: 1-3
- LEVELS: N/A

12345

interlude, but doesn't measure up to a night of all-out play.

—Amie Katz

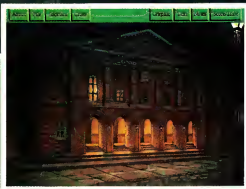
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KIDS LOVE QWIRKS FOR WHAT QWIRKS HAS GOT

It's déjà vu all over again...and again...and again... Several years ago a Russian programmer by the name of Alexy Pajitnov created a little thing called *Tetris*. If nothing else, the little puzzle game proved that millions of souls were ready to devote millions of hours moving building blocks around the computer screen. The enjoyably annoying thing about *Tetris* and its numerous clones is how addictive it all was. Apparently, people have some instinctive drive to participate in what amounts to a psychology experiment involving spatial relations and pattern recognition. Go figure.

The latest incarnation of *Tetris* is *Qwirks*, wherein the object is to stack little blob creatures called Qwirks as they fall from above. You want Qwirks of the same color adjacent to one another. When four Qwirks of a feather are stacked together, they disappear. The stack of remaining Qwirks collapses, filling in the empty spaces. The goal is to keep the middle column of Qwirks from reaching the top of the screen. It's that simple.

Qwirks is much more difficult and fast paced than *Tetris*. For example, a Challenge Mode puts you up against various cartoon opponents. If you can collapse multiple groups of Qwirks simultaneously, you launch inert clear Qwirks into their space to make things very difficult. A Puzzle Mode and split-screen Two-player Mode are also supported. Unfortunately, head-to-head modern or network play was overlooked.

Puzzle games like *Qwirks* don't boast full-motion video and don't even have a story line. It's all about play time. While not original, *Tetris* fans will like *Qwirks* for the new challenges it offers. Newcomers will quickly discover just how addicting puzzle games can be.

—David Gerding



Qwirks

- PUBLISHER: Spectrum Holobyte
- SYSTEM: Windows CD-ROM
- THEME: Puzzle
- MEGS: 8.7
- PLAYERS: 1-2
- LEVELS: N/A

3i/2

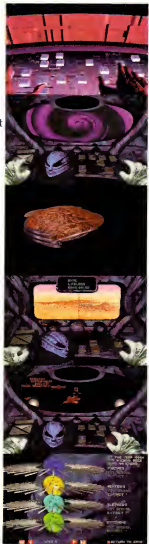
JUST IN TIME

Man, just when you thought it was safe to ship a load of ore to Jupiter you get kidnapped by a race from another galaxy and told only you can stop destruction of the universe by nasty, sentient viral life forms. But, hey, as any real craftsman knows, you can't save the universe without the proper tools. Some fly-by-night operations might try to get by with an old rust bucket and a couple of antique hydrogen bombs, but your new employers know how to do things right. You get a brand-new ship capable of movement in both time and space, equipped with its own AI. The basic plan is simple: You need to go back in time and seed four planets of this galaxy with the races that belong here. But you do it back in prehistory. Then you must hop through time and guide your new charges along with little suggestions here and there about their development. The goal is to guide the races to a strong social and technological system that can withstand the Microids that would eventually kill the universe without your help.

As you continue your mission, a rich tapestry of history and interaction unfolds, finally causing you to make rough decisions about war and death among your charges. Hey, no one ever said saving the galaxy was going to be easy. While the implementation is only good, with adequate graphics, play mechanics and sound,

the originality is enough to make it a fun and exciting game. With time hopping, combat, social interaction and a wisecracking AI to boot, *MAD* offers a strong playing experience. You might want to check it out.

—John P. Withers



Millennia: Altered Destinies

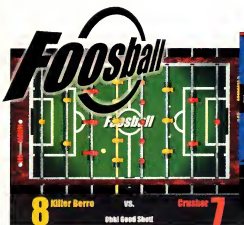
- PUBLISHER: Take 2 Interactive
- SYSTEM: PC DOS
- THEME: Science Fiction
- MEGS: 3.3
- PLAYERS: 1
- LEVELS: N/A

12345

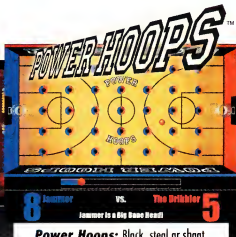
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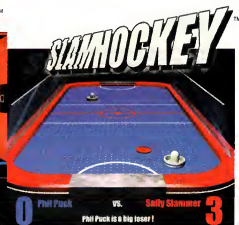
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CAPTAIN ON THE BRIDGE



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U.S.S. Ticonderoga: Life and Death on the High Seas puts you in command of a Tico cruiser in three different campaign settings: Russian conflict in the Atlantic, Iranian hostilities in the Gulf and a conflict with North Korea in the Pacific.

This title takes an interesting view of command interface, by actually putting the player on a rendered model of the ship. You can walk from room to room,

accessing various displays.

This is an interesting and somewhat realistic view, but soon becomes tedious.

Luckily command key options allow direct access for quicker response.

While the player can manually control the ship

and its weapons systems, another command form has been provided. Called High Level Commands, this mode of play has the Captain give orders to the First Officer, who then ensures the appropriate commands are carried out.

While the various command options are interesting, the game does suffer from a number of flaws. The High Level Commands need constant attention to make them effective, since the AI seems to reset them every time a new contact is logged. It is hard from the game documentation to figure out the working of the ship's systems. While *Tico* offers a plethora of realistic command options, it suffers from some detail problems that might make it less than an ideal cruise for the perfectionist.

—John P. Withers

U.S.S. Ticonderoga: Life and Death on the High Seas

- PUBLISHER: Mindscape
- SYSTEM: PC Windows/Mac
- THEME: Wargame/Naval Sim
- SIZE: 314 MB HD
- PLAYERS: 1
- LEVELS: N/A

1231/245

METAMORPHOSIS II

Windows 95 was proving to be something of an impediment to those of us who love computer games. The old DOS-based games, with their funky non-standard CPU commands and memory-management were sending Win95 machines into convulsions. I'm happy to say that finally, one game company has realized that resistance to Windows is futile.

SSI's *EntoMorph: Plague of the Darkfall* is designed to run on Windows and, in fact, requires it. SSI's second CRPG set in the new fantasy realm *The World of Aden*, *EntoMorph* is an excellent adjunct to *Thunderscape*, the first *Aden* title.

The good islanders of *Aden* are not only plagued by ravenous, giant insects, but are also slowly and agonizingly being transformed into exoskeletal crawlies. You're cast in the role of Squire Warrick, a good-natured fighter who must undergo the horrific metamorphosis to rid his once-tranquil land of an all-consuming evil. As is expected in action RPGs, you explore your surroundings, pick up information and kill monsters.

Although set in the same reality, *EntoMorph* doesn't use the outstanding turn-based, first-person combat engine used in *Thunderscape*. Nor does it offer *Thunderscape*'s handy automap-



EntoMorph

- PUBLISHER: SSI
- SYSTEM: PC CD-ROM Win95 or 3.1
- THEME: RPG
- MEGS: 32
- PLAYERS: 1
- LEVELS: N/A

12345

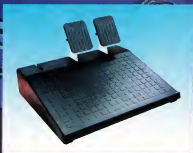
ping function.

EntoMorph uses an enhanced *Al-Qadim* engine offering a crisp 3/4 top view of the action. Melees are real time and operate quite like those in *Al-Qadim*, but are more varied in opposition and available magic spells.

The clues to the mysteries of *The Darkfall* are fairly straightforward, without a lot of logical dead ends or complicated combat, making it a good beginner's CRPG. A hardcore, experienced dungeon dude would be more challenged by *Realms of Arkania: Star Trail* or *TES: Arena*. After playing the first two CRPGs set in the *World of Aden*, varied though they are, I look forward to the next one from the SSI shop.

—Dave Harris

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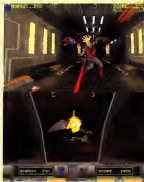
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LETTING LOOSE WITH THE NETWORKS

I was one of those gamers who were disappointed by *Rebel Assault*, not because there was anything innately wrong with it, but because there was nothing the player could do to affect the outcome. It was like a made-for-TV movie, where one got to play an arcade game periodically instead of watch commercials. NWC's latest offering carries on along much the same lines.

Wetlands tells the tale of John Cole, bounty hunter and gunner extraordinaire. He's out to capture an escaped mad scientist who has developed a technology to emulate God's Old Testament wrath and deluge any planet with a Great Flood all its own. The cinematic narrative is presented in high-quality, 3-D-rendered animation that makes these sequences visually interesting. The story is entertaining, but it's just a non-interactive movie after all. The folks at New World did a good job integrating the arcade scenes with the story. Each movie scene gives a lead-in for the next shoot-'em-up scenario. Three levels of arcade difficulty are provided, which should accommodate both novice and veteran. The relatively short action sequences, combined with the thematic pauses, prevent *Wetlands* from fatiguing the player.

The replay value of cinematic games is usually low, although if the size and scope is great enough you don't notice. There's nothing particularly wrong with *Wetlands*, just be aware of the shortcomings inherent in this genre. —Dave Harris



Wetlands

- PUBLISHER: New World computing, Inc.
- SYSTEM: PC CD-ROM
- THEME: Action/Adventure
- MEGS: 8
- LEVELS: 20

12 1/2 345

SCREAMING FOR VENGEANCE

For those PC racing gaming enthusiasts impressed with the frame update found in Namco's *Ridge Racer* title for the arcades and the Sony PlayStation, Virgin Interactive has a racing game for you. If you're looking for a comparable title to *Ridge Racer* on the PC, Graffiti's *Screamers* may be an answer to your longing. In fact, the game appears to clone, or at least closely model, Namco's arcade hit title. It accomplishes this goal remarkably well.

Screamers features six different racetracks and 12 different vehicles to master. Conversely, its arcade and PlayStation equivalent only plays one track and a handful of cars. The game also features something that was lacking in *Ridge Racer*; it's a feature that PlayStation owners wanted in their versions from day one but will never get: multiplayer link-up. *Screamers* has it, in both modem and local-area network flavors. It's especially entertaining playing over a LAN, looking over the shoulders of your human opponents, giggling as you force them off the road.

Like most games being released these days, *Screamers* screams for a Pentium even though it does an acceptable job on a 486/66, its lowest-end common denominator. This is the way of the gaming world today, folks. If you want to play

games being released today, you need a Pentium. If you haven't upgraded already, consider this Christmas to be your last opportunity to be able to play games like *Screamers* that bridge the gap.

My final recommendation is if you're envious for a racing game like those found at the arcade or a PlayStation but can't justify the purchase of those hardware platforms for just that purpose,



Screamers

- DEVELOPER: Graffiti
- PUBLISHER: Virgin Interactive Entertainment
- REQUIREMENTS: 486/66 (P-90 recommended), 8MB RAM (16MB recommended), SVGA video card (PCI VESA recommended), CD-ROM Drive, Thrustmaster T1 or T2 steering wheel recommended.
- PLAYERS: 1
- LEVELS: N/A

12345



Screamers will suffice. If, on the other hand, you prefer race-car realism found in Papyrus racing sims, *Screamers* may provide nothing more than a faint echo.

—Mike Riley



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Arnie Katz has had strong opinions about the gaming industry since before you were in diapers.

Gaming's Lost Generation

Here's a news flash: 32-Bit consoles are dead. Executives of leading manufacturers have said as much in private, even while their speed-freak commercials bombard us relentlessly.

Is this premature burial? Manufacturers often caution us against dismissing new, slow-selling systems too quickly. That's an understandable attitude for sales-hungry companies, but it won't wash this time. The fat lady hasn't sung yet, but evidence mounts that the next-generation platforms as a group could turn out to be the lost generation. None seem likely to sell Genesis or SNES numbers, or even close. I'm not hustling any specific system to an early grave, but it's definitely time to take a hard look at the whole phenomenon.

Consoles arrive in waves. Platforms within a given generation have comparable technical specs and price points. What determines whether people buy into the new generation or spend the money on CDs is how much better the new platforms are than the ones currently hooked to the TV.

The feeling is growing, both in the industry and among consumers, that 32-Bit consoles don't deliver the goods. They don't raise the ante enough to trigger the "gotta have it" impulse.

It wouldn't be the first time that Americans

have dished "great new systems." The Atari 5200 and the TurboGrafx-16 are examples of stillborn systems of the past. Today, we've got a crop of them, including the 32X, Sega CD, 3DO and Jaguar.

These systems aren't failing because they stink. All have some good, and even a few excellent, games. They're going down the chute because they aren't good enough. Not enough consumers think it's worth \$250-350 to buy something that isn't a big step forward.

Nintendo has played the high-stakes hardware game brilliantly. They have made all the right moves, and only a fool would bet against the Big N eating some of its 32-Bit rivals for lunch by the end of '96.

Nintendo's near-flawless strategy has two elements. The company is committed to pulling out all the stops on SNES cartridges for its final Christmas. *Donkey Kong Country 2*, *Killer Instinct* and *Yoshi's Island*, all late '95 releases, are close enough in entertainment value to current 32-Bit games that most consumers are going for 16-Bit software ahead of 32-Bit hardware.

Nintendo was also smart enough to scrap its 32-Bit console before it ever got off the drawing board. It didn't rush a stopgap console to market to fleece mindlessly enthusiastic early adopters. Once Nintendo determined that 32-Bit wouldn't do the job over the long haul, it went back to school on its SNES replacement. Now console gamers are chomping at the bit for the soon-to-be-released Ultra 64.

A new generation of consoles is coming, but it'll be based on 64-Bit architecture. Within two years, today's 32-Bit machines will be interesting curiosities, an intriguing sidelight in the evolution of console gaming. ●

—Arnie Katz

Are 32-Bit systems
going down the drain?
Arnie Katz answers
a resounding yes.



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David Siller: From Pong to PlayStation

Universal Interactive Studios' senior producer David Siller has been in gaming since it was born. Beginning in the mid-'70s, Siller operated coin-op games with his father and brother before moving on to design games for Nichibutsu, Tecmo and Sunsoft before landing at Universal. Responsible for titles from *Rygar* and *Mag Max* to *Aero the Acrobat* and *Looney Tunes Basketball*, Siller's career has evolved along with the gaming industry. His passion for gaming has also spread to his sons, Justin, who designs games for Interplay, and 18-year-old Ryan, who also plans on entering the field. Known to buy just about any and every new game on the market, the San Antonio native's game collection is nearly as vast as his knowledge of the history of video games.

What was the first game you ever designed?

It was a game called *Spy Alien*. It was a coin-op game that never made it into the marketplace.

What's your favorite game?

One of my all-time favorite games is *Galaga*. Also *Pole Position* and the original *Ghosts and Goblins*. I started playing video games before there were video games. My father was an aircraft mechanic in the Airforce, and when he retired, he set up a television repair shop in the garage of our home. I would go into his office and play with his oscilloscope. By manipulating the controls, I could change the wave-form patterns. I'd spend hours playing with his oscilloscope, so in a way, that was kind of like a video game. It was the beginning of it all, for me, anyway.

Are you allergic to anything?

Penicillin, so don't stick me with it.

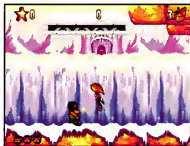
Besides the oscilloscope, what's the first game you remember playing?

Pong. I go back a ways. *Pong* was the first game I played, but the first game that really got me excited was *Cinematronics Space War*. That was a black-and-white, XY monitor game where you

PC as a game machine is a compromise in terms. It's trying to be everything to everybody, and the problem with that is it becomes a specialist at nothing. I think what will be a greater aspect of consoles in the future is online multiplayer gaming.

When you raid the 'fridge, what do you eat?

Ben and Jerry's New York Super Fudge Chunk ice cream.



What do you do for fun outside of playing games?

Race karts. Racing karts are the most affordable type of motor sports that the average guy can participate in. The beauty of it is, as much as I love games, you need to escape sometimes, so when you come back to it after racing go-karts, it's fresh.

Who's better at playing video games, you or your sons?

When my sons were infants, they had joy pads in their hands. When they were really young, I could beat them at everything, but they came back to avenge that. We were playing *Virtua Fighter II* together the other day, and I held my own. That's a very controversial question. ●

Having been in the gaming industry since it was born, how do you see it evolving?

For the immediate future, in spite of what some are predicting, I'd say the console systems are going to be around for a long time. There will always be some kind of console system. I think the

had a small sun in the middle of the screen that had a sense of gravity.





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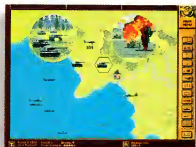
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